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portions of the kingdom. It turned out that the resistance of the States of Bretagne to the orders of the royal governor was but a cover for continued negotiations with Spain, looking toward a permanent separation of Bretagne from France. The States at last declared the province independent because its privileges had been invaded; and the standard of rebellion was thus boldly displayed. The progress and crisis of the revolt are described with sufficient fidelity to truth in these pages. The name of Gaston de Chanlay is the only one of the five which has no place in an absolutely accurate record of the scene in the public square of Nantes, at midnight of a certain tempestuous night in March, 1720.

"To this day," says Dumas, in one of his strictly historical works, "La Regence," "in the very heart of Bretagne, at Saint-Malo, at Lorient, at Villeneuve, at Brest or Finisterre, one finds in the poorest huts portraits of Talhouet, Pontcalec, Montlouis, and Du Couëdic handed down from father to son. And when you ask your hosts, the occupants of these huts, who these men are whose features they preserve so devoutly, in their trustful ignorance some will reply: 'They are saints;' others, 'They are martyrs.'"

The scenes between the regent and Dubois are

rticularly interesting, because they mark so
rply the contrast between the regent's natural
osition to leniency and mercy — even, perhaps
of all, to those whose blows were aimed at
wn person or power — and the facility with
he yielded to the representations of his
whose hold upon his mind and will grew
day by day until the end.

Duc d'Orléans has been fortunate in this,
virtues which he did possess — large-
nerosity, unfailing kindness and courtesy
iors, and intense affection for his chil-
r born in or out of wedlock — have
to arouse emotions distinctly resem-
y for one whose vices, though of
portions, were those of the age
and whose life was embitt
ed accusations of having ca
is of the Duc and Duches
Duc de Bretagne, — the f
r of the young king.
ed to his credit th
e and affection ov
ild, whose hold
l uncertain, and
l what was sti
f Christendom

The regent was not fortunate in his legitimate daughters. The career of the Duchesse de Berri is revolting and saddening in the extreme, even although we are told by one of the contemporary memoir-writers that a *post-mortem* examination revealed the fact that she was "crack-brained." The convent life of the Abbess of Chelles was little short of scandalous; while the matrimonial bickerings of Mademoiselle de Valois and her husband, the Duke of Modena, were of European notoriety. A fourth daughter became the wife of the Prince of Asturias, and was Queen of Spain for the few months which intervened between the absurd abdication of Philippe V. and the death of her husband. Her leading characteristics were an extremely morose disposition, and personal habits slovenly in the extreme; and her Spanish subjects seized the first convenient pretext to send her back to France, and were very remiss in remitting her allowance. The youngest of all, Mademoiselle de Beaujolais, was the only one who combined good morals with an attractive personality, and she died of a broken heart almost before she was out of her teens.

The memoirs of Madame de Staal-de Launay furnish abundant authority for the entertaining description given by Dumas of the life led by

the conspirators in the Bastille. The author of the memoirs was decidedly heartless in her treatment of poor Maison-Rouge, the lieutenant of the fortress, whose ardent passion for herself she pitilessly used as a means of forwarding her love affair with the Chevalier de Mesnil. The following passage is illustrative of the skill with which she kept two strings to her bow; and at the same time it enlightens us still further as to the diversions in which these fortunate prisoners were allowed to indulge.

"One day when he (Maison-Rouge) was taking supper with me, Mesnil, who had found a way of opening the door of his room, came and listened at my door. He claimed that I was very gay and lively, and that I had spoken of him with insulting levity. But he was even more put out because, when we left the table, we went to the window, the weather being extremely warm. There the lieutenant suggested that I should sing, and I began a scene from the opera of "Iphigénie." The Duc de Richelieu, who was at his window, sang the reply of Orestes, which fitted in very nicely with our situation. Maison-Rouge, who thought that it entertained me, allowed us to sing the scene through. It was by no means entertaining to the Chevalier de Mesnil. The

next day he questioned me in his letter about the supper, at which I had no idea that he had been a listener. I did not remember that his name had been mentioned between us, so I said nothing about it to him. This seemed to him to import some secret understanding between Maison-Rouge and myself, and he was so enraged that he insisted upon my breaking with the lieutenant. I at last succeeded, however, in making him understand how excessively inconvenient that would be for our affairs, and he cooled down."

Messire Voyer d'Argenson, an excellent lieutenant of police transformed into a very mediocre keeper of the seals, subjected Mademoiselle de Launay to an inquisitory ordeal very similar to that undergone at his hands by Gaston de Chanlay; and the versatile *femme de chambre* acquitted herself with no less skill and discretion than was exhibited by the Breton hero. M. d'Argenson is an interesting figure of the period, no less in his own right than as the father of two sons, each of whom made an honorable name in high office under Louis XV. The Marquis owes his greatest fame, however, to his very entertaining and valuable memoirs of the first thirty years of the reign.

When Madame du Maine was at last allowed to return to Sceaux, she found assembled there,

Pompadour, Laval, Malezieux, and Mademoiselle de Launay. "Waiting," says Dumas, "to recommence those delightful entertainments which poor, blind Chaulieu, who could not see them, used to call "*les nuits blanches de Sceaux.*"

It is, perhaps, mere supererogation to repeat what has been said so often of others of M. Dumas' romances, — that contemporary authority can be cited for every anecdote or incident not directly connected with the distinctively romantic portions of the narrative.

The Princess Palatine's pleasantry as to the gifts of the fairies to her son at his birth is told by Saint-Simon and Duclos, as is the anecdote of the same out-spoken lady's very forcible expression of her displeasure when her son's contemplated marriage was announced to her. Saint-Simon, again, and the Marquis d'Argenson agree in affirming that Dubois had the temerity to demand a nomination to the Sacred College from Louis XIV. as a reward for his potent assistance in bringing about that marriage. This latter anecdote is discredited, however, by a very recent writer,[1] who has undertaken, with what measure of success it does not concern us to inquire, to clear away some

[1] James Breck Perkins, in "France Under the Regency," etc

of the odium with which Dubois has been surrounded from his death to the present day.

The assumption of queenly pomp by the mad Duchesse de Berri, as well as her secret marriage with Riom, are equally well authenticated. The wrath of the Princess Palatine at this misalliance was far more violent than that of the culprit's father, who certainly was indulgent to a fault. The severity with which Riom was treated was due to the outcry of the grandmother, rather than to the outraged dignity of the father.

There is, alas, no doubt that the regent's daily avocations and distractions are faithfully described in the course of this narrative. Saint-Simon, his chief apologist, deplores the fact which he cannot explain away, except by putting the blame upon the shoulders of Dubois; but the generous impulse to which D'Orléans is made to yield when he pardons De Chanlay, whose avowed object was to compass his death, is no less characteristic of the unfortunate prince, of whom the same apologist, who was also his dearest friend, said long after his death that his character was an enigma which he had never been able to solve.

# LIST OF CHARACTERS.

**Period, 1719.**

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PHILIPPE, DUC D'ORLÉANS, Regent of France.
MADAME ELIZABETH CHARLOTTE, PRINCESS PALATINE, his mother.
DUCHESSE D'ORLÉANS, his wife.
DUCHESSE DE BERRI,
MADEMOISELLE DE CHARTRES, Abbess of Chelles,
MADEMOISELLE DE VALOIS,
} daughters of the Regent.
LOUIS, the Regent's son.
ABBÉ DUBOIS, Minister of State.
HÉLÈNE DE CHAVERNY, a natural daughter of the Regent, in love with Gaston de Chanlay.
DUC DE ST. SIMON,
MARQUIS DE BROGLIE,
DUC DE NOAILLES,
CHEVALIER DE SIMIANE,
M. DE BIRON,
M. DE MOUCHY,
} of the French Court.
MARQUIS DE LAFARE, Captain of the Regent's Guards.
MARQUIS DE LA VRILLIÈRE,
M. DE LEBLANC,
} of the Council.
MESSIRE VOYER D'ARGENSON, Lieutenant of Police.

M. DE LAUNAY, Governor of the Bastille.
M. DE MAISON-ROUGE, his Lieutenant.
DUC DE RICHELIEU, } prisoners in the Bastille.
MARQUIS DE POMPADOUR,
COMTE DE LAVAL,
M. DE MALEZIEUX,
ABBÉ BRIGAUD,
CHEVALIER DUMESNIL,
MADEMOISELLE SOPHIE DE LAUNAY,
CAUCHEREAU, music-master to Mademoiselle de Chartres.
CHEVALIER DE RIOM, married to Duchesse de Berri.
COMTE DE NOCÉ, a friend of the Regent.
CARDINAL ALBERONI.
DUC D'OLIVARÈS, a Spanish agent.
GASTON DE CHANLAY, in love with Hélène, } conspirators against the Regent's life.
MARQUIS DE PONTCALEC,
M. DE MONTLOUIS,
M. DU COUËDIC,
M. DE TALHOUET,
CAPTAIN LA JONQUIÈRE,
MARQUIS DE GUER, uncle of Marquis de Pontcalec.
SIRE DE PONTCALEC.
THE SORCERESS OF SAVÉNAY.
BARON DE CARADEC.
M. DE MONTARAU, intendent of the Province of Bretagne.
MARÉCHAL DE MONTESQUIOU, commanding at Bretagne.
M. DE CHATEAUNEUF.
LA SOURIS, the Regent's favorite.
JULIE, the mistress of Dubois.
CHEVALIER DE M——.
MADAME URSULE, Superior of the Ursulines at Clisson.
SISTER THÉRÈSE, of the Ursulines.
MADAME DESROCHES, in the Regent's Service.
BOURGUIGNON, landlord of the Hôtel "Muid d'Amour."
LA JONCIÈRE, a smuggler.

La Jonquille, sergeant in the French Guards.
Grippart, L'Enlevant, } soldiers.
Oven, Gaston de Chanlay's servant.
Tapin, L'Eveillé, } in the service of Dubois.
Christopher, a jailer at Nantes.
Lamer, the executioner

# THE REGENT'S DAUGHTER.

## CHAPTER I.

### AN ABBESS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

On the eighth day of February, 1719, a carriage, bearing the fleur-de-lis of France, with the motto of Orléans, preceded by two outriders and a page, entered the porch of the Abbey of Chelles precisely as the clock struck ten, and the door having been quickly opened, its two occupants stepped out.

The first was a man of from forty-five to forty-six years of age, short, and rather stout, with a high color, easy in his movements, and displaying in every gesture a certain air of high rank and authority.

The second, who followed slowly, was also of small stature, but thin and debilitated. His face, though not precisely ugly, was somewhat repulsive in spite of the intelligence which sparkled in his eyes and was expressed in the curling of his lips. He seemed to feel the cold, and followed his companion, wrapped up in an ample cloak.

The first of these two made his way up the staircase with the air of a man well acquainted with the locality. Passing through a large antechamber containing several nuns, who bowed to the ground as he passed, he ran

rather than walked to a reception-room, which, it must be confessed, bore but little trace of that austerity which is ordinarily ascribed to the interior of a cloister. The other, who followed leisurely, was saluted almost as humbly by the nuns.

"And now," said the first, "wait here and warm yourself while I go to her; and in ten minutes I will make an end of all these abuses you mention. If she deny, and I want proof, I will call you."

"Ten minutes, Monseigneur!" replied the man in the cloak; "in two hours your Highness will not even have broached the subject of your visit. Oh, the Abbess de Chelles is a clever woman! Is it possible that you have not known it?"

So saying, he stretched himself carelessly in an easy chair which he had drawn near the fire, and rested his thin legs on the fender.

"Yes, yes," replied he who had been addressed as "your Highness;" "I know, and if I could forget it, you take care to remind me of it often enough. You devil of a man, tell me, — why have you made me come here to-day through all this wind and snow?"

"Because you would not come yesterday, Monseigneur."

"Yesterday it was impossible; I had an appointment with Lord Stair at five o'clock."

"In a little house in the Rue des Bons Enfants. My lord does not live any longer, then, at the English embassy?"

"Abbé, I had forbidden you to follow me."

"Monseigneur, it is my duty to disobey you."

"Well then, disobey; but let me tell lies at my pleasure, without impertinently showing me that you know I am lying, — merely to prove the efficiency of your police."

"Monseigneur may rest easy in future; I will believe everything you say."

"I will not promise as much in return, Abbé, for in this case I think you have made a mistake."

"Monseigneur, I know what I said, and I repeat it."

"But look! no noise, no light, perfect quiet! Your account is incorrect; it is evident that our agents are not well informed."

"Yesterday, Monseigneur, where you stand, there was an orchestra of fifty musicians; there, where that young sister kneels so devoutly, was a buffet. What was upon it I cannot tell, but I know it was there; and in the gallery on the left, where a modest supper of lentils and cream cheese is now preparing for the holy sisters, were two hundred people, drinking, dancing, and making —"

"Well, making what?"

"Making love, Monseigneur."

"*Diable!* are you sure of this?"

"Rather more sure than if I had seen it; and that is why you do well in coming to-day, and would have done better in coming yesterday. This sort of life does not become an abbess, Monseigneur."

"No; it is only fit for an abbé. Ha!"

"I am a politician, Monseigneur."

"Well, my daughter is a political abbess, that is all."

"Oh, let it be so, if it suit you, Monseigneur; I am not so particular in point of morals, you know. To-morrow there will be another song or two out, but of what consequence is a song more or less? 'Beautiful Abbess, whence do you come?' will make a very fitting companion-piece to 'Monsieur l'Abbé, whither are you going?'"

"Well, well, wait for me, and I will go and scold."

"Take my word for it, Monseigneur, if you wish to

scold properly you had better do it here, before me; if you fail in memory or arguments, make a sign to me, and I will come to the rescue."

"Yes, yes; you are right," said the person who had undertaken to redress wrongs, and in whom we hope the reader has recognized the regent, Philippe d'Orléans. "Yes; this scandal must cease, — or at least must be checked; the abbess must not receive more than twice a week. There must be no more of these routs and dances, and the rule of seclusion must be enforced; the convent should not be as open as the forest to every one who comes. Mademoiselle d'Orléans passed from gayety to a religious life; she left the Palais Royal for Chelles in spite of all I could do to prevent her. Well, then, now let her be abbess for five days in the week; she will still have two days for playing the lady of fashion, — and that, it seems to me, is enough."

"Ah, Monseigneur, you are beginning to see the thing in its true light."

"Is not this what you wish?"

"It is what is necessary. It seems to me that an abbess who has thirty valets, fifteen footmen, ten cooks, eight grooms, and a mute; who fences, plays the horn, and the violoncello; who is a surgeon and a hair-dresser; who shoots and makes fireworks, — cannot find her religious life very tedious."

"That is true, indeed, but — Has not my daughter been told of my arrival?" said the duke to an old nun who crossed the room with a bunch of keys in her hand; "I wish to know whether I shall go to her, or whether she is coming to me."

"Madame is coming, Monseigneur," replied the sister, respectfully.

"It is well," murmured the regent, who began to think

that the worthy abbess was treating him rather disrespectfully, both as daughter and as subject.

"Monseigneur, remember the parable of Jesus driving out the money-changers from the temple; you know it, or ought to know it, for I taught it you when I was your preceptor. Now, drive out these musicians, these Pharisees, these comedians and anatomists; three only of each profession will make a nice escort for our return."

"Do not fear, I am in a preaching vein."

"Then," replied Dubois, rising, "that is most fortunate, for here she is."

At this moment a door leading to the interior of the convent was opened, and the person so impatiently expected appeared.

Let us explain who was this worthy person who had succeeded, by repeated follies, in rousing the anger of Philippe d'Orléans, — that is to say, of the most good-natured man and the most indulgent father in France.

Mademoiselle de Chartres, Louise-Adélaïde d'Orléans, was the second and prettiest of the regent's three daughters. She had a beautiful complexion, fine eyes, a good figure, and well-shaped hands. Her teeth were splendid, and her grandmother, the princess palatine, compared them to a string of pearls in a coral casket. She danced well, sang better, read music easily, and played admirably. She had learned of Cauchereau, one of the first artists at the opera, with whom she had made much more progress than is common with ladies, and especially with princesses. It is true that she was most assiduous; the secret of that assiduity will soon, perhaps, be revealed to the reader, as it was to the duchess, her mother.

All her tastes were masculine. She appeared to have changed sex with her brother Louis. She loved dogs and horses, amused herself with pistols and foils, but cared

little for any feminine occupations. Her chief predilection, however, was for music; she seldom missed a night at the opera when her master Cauchereau performed; and once, when he surpassed himself in an air, she exclaimed, "Bravo, bravo, my dear Cauchereau!" in a voice audible to the whole house.

The Duchesse d'Orléans judged that the exclamation was somewhat indiscreet for a princess of the blood, and decided that Mademoiselle de Chartres knew enough of music. Cauchereau, well paid for his instructions, was informed that his pupil's musical education was completed, and that there was no further occasion for him to present himself at the Palais Royal. The duchess also begged her daughter to spend a fortnight at the convent of Chelles, the abbess of which, a sister of Maréchal de Villars, was a friend of hers.

It was doubtless during this retreat that Mademoiselle — who, says Saint-Simon, did everything by leaps and bounds — resolved to renounce the world. Toward the end of the holy week of 1718, she asked and obtained her father's permission to spend Easter at Chelles; but at the expiration of the Easter season, instead of resuming her place at the palace as princess of the blood, she expressed a wish to remain at Chelles as a nun. The duke, who considered that the cloister was already sufficiently represented in his family, — for his legitimate son Louis he was wont to call a monk, and one of his natural sons was Abbé of St. Albin, — did all that he could in opposition to her strange resolve; but Mademoiselle de Chartres was obstinate, and on the 23d day of April she took the vows. Then the duke, remembering that his daughter, though now a nun, was none the less a princess of the blood, treated with Mademoiselle de Villars for her abbey. An income of twelve thousand francs settled upon the mar-

shal's sister concluded the transaction. Mademoiselle de Chartres was named abbess in her stead, and she had occupied the post about a year.

This, then, was the Abbess of Chelles, who appeared before her father, not surrounded by that elegant and profane court which in the early morning had disappeared, but followed by six nuns dressed in black and holding torches. There was no sign of frivolity or of pleasure, nothing but the most sombre apparel and the most severe aspect.

The regent, however, suspected that while he had been kept waiting all this had been prepared. "I do not like hypocrisy," said he, sharply, "and can forgive vices which are not hidden under the garb of virtues. All these lights, Madame, are doubtless the remains of yesterday's illumination. Are all your flowers so faded, and all your guests so fatigued, that you cannot show me a single bouquet nor a single dancer?"

"Monsieur," said the abbess, in a grave tone, "you have come to the wrong place if you have come hither seeking for fêtes and amusements."

"Yes," answered the regent; "I see that if you feasted yesterday you fast to-day."

"Did you come here, Monsieur, to catechize? At least what you see should reply to any accusations against me."

"I came to tell you, Madame," replied the regent, annoyed at being supposed to have been duped, "that the life you lead displeases me; your conduct yesterday was unbecoming an abbess; your austerities to-day are unbecoming a princess of the blood, — decide, once for all, whether you will be abbess or princess. People begin to speak ill of you, and I have enemies enough of my own, without your saddling me with others from the depth of your convent."

"Alas, Monsieur, in giving entertainments, balls, and concerts, which have been quoted as the best in Paris, I have pleased neither those enemies, nor you, nor myself. Yesterday I had my last interview with the world; this morning I have taken leave of it forever; and to-day, while still ignorant of your visit, I had adopted a determination from which I will never depart."

"And what is it?" asked the regent, suspecting that this was only a new specimen of his daughter's ordinary follies.

"Come to this window and look out," said the abbess.

The regent, in compliance with the invitation, approached the window, and saw a large fire blazing in the middle of the courtyard. Dubois — who was as curious as if he had really been an abbé — slipped up beside him. Several people were rapidly passing and repassing before the fire, and throwing various singular-shaped objects into the flames.

"But what is that?" asked the regent of Dubois, who seemed as much surprised as himself.

"That which is burning now?" asked the abbé.

"Yes," replied the regent.

"Faith, Monseigneur, it looks to me very much like a violoncello!"

"It is mine," said the abbess, — "an excellent violoncello by Valeri."

"And you are burning it!" exclaimed the duke.

"All these instruments are sources of perdition," said the abbess, in a tone which betrayed the most profound remorse.

"Eh, but here is a harpsichord," interrupted the duke.

"My harpsichord, Monsieur; it was so perfect that it enticed me toward earthly things; I condemned it this morning."

"And what are those chests of papers with which they feeding the fire?" asked Dubois, whom the spectacle ned to interest immensely.

"My music, which I am having burned."

"Your music?" demanded the regent.

"Yes, and even yours," answered the abbess; "look carefully, and you will see your opera of 'Panthée' follow in its turn. You will understand that my resolution once taken, its execution was necessarily general."

"Well, Madame, this time you are really mad! To light the fire with music, and then feed it with violoncellos and harpsichords is really a little too luxurious."

"I am doing penance, Monsieur."

"Hum! say rather that you are refitting your house, and that this is an excuse for buying new furniture, since you are doubtless tired of the old."

"No, Monseigneur, it is no such thing."

"Well, then, what is it? Tell me frankly."

"In truth, I am weary of amusing myself; and, indeed, I intend to act differently."

"And what are you going to do?"

"I am going with my nuns to visit my tomb."

"*Diable*, Monseigneur!" exclaimed the abbé, "her wits are gone at last."

"It will be truly edifying, will it not, Monsieur?" continued the abbess, gravely.

"Indeed," answered the regent, "if you really do this, I doubt not but people will laugh at it twice as much as they did at your suppers."

"Will you accompany me, gentlemen?" continued the abbess; "I am going to spend a few minutes in my coffin; it is a fancy I have had a long time."

"You will have plenty of time for that," said the regent; "moreover, you have not even invented this amusement, for Charles the Fifth — who became a monk, as you became a nun, without exactly knowing why — thought of it before you."

"Then you will not go with me, Monseigneur?" said the abbess.

"I," answered the duke, who had not the least sympathy with sombre ideas, "I go to see tombs! I go to hear the *De Profundis!* No, *pardieu!* and the only thing which consoles me for not being able to escape them some day is that I shall neither see the one nor hear the other."

"Ah, Monsieur," answered the abbess, in a scandalized tone, "you do not, then, believe in the immortality of the soul?"

"I believe that you are raving mad, my daughter. Confound this abbé who promises me a feast, and brings me to a funeral."

"By my faith, Monseigneur," said Dubois, "I think I prefer the extravagance of yesterday; it was more attractive."

The abbess bowed, and made a few steps toward the door. The duke and Dubois remained staring at each other, uncertain whether to laugh or cry.

"One word more," said the duke; "are you decided this time, or is it only a fever which you have caught from your confessor? If it be real I have nothing to say; but if it be a fever, I desire that they cure you of it. I have Morceau and Chirac, whom I pay for attending on me and mine."

"Monseigneur," answered the abbess, "you forget that I know enough of medicine to undertake my own cure, if I were ill; I can therefore assure you that I am not. I am a Jansenist; that is all."

"Ah," cried the duke, "this is more of Father le Doux's work, — that execrable Benedictine! At least I know a treatment which will cure him."

"What is that?" asked the abbess.

"The Bastille."

And he went out in a rage, followed by Dubois, who was laughing heartily.

"You see," said the regent, after a long silence, and when they were nearing Paris, "the situation was absurd; I was in a mood to preach, but it was I who got the sermon!"

"Well, you are a happy father, that is all; I congratulate you on the reformation of your younger daughter, Mademoiselle de Chartres. Unluckily your elder daughter, the Duchesse de Berri —"

"Oh, do not talk of her; she is my ulcer. And therefore, now that I am in a bad temper —"

"Well?"

"I have a great mind to take advantage of my humor and finish with her at one blow."

"She is at the Luxembourg?"

"I believe so."

"Let us go to the Luxembourg, then, Monseigneur."

"You go with me?"

"I shall not leave you to-night."

"Bah!"

"I have a project for you."

"For me?"

"I will take you to a supper."

"To a supper with women?"

"Yes."

"How many of them will there be?"

"Two."

"And how many men?"

"Two."

"A four-square party, then?"

"Precisely."

"And I shall be amused?"

"I think so."

"Take care, Dubois, you are assuming a very great responsibility."

"Monseigneur loves the new?"

"Yes."

"The unexpected?"

"Yes."

"Very well, you will see them; that is all I can say."

"So be it," replied the regent; "to the Luxembourg first, and then —"

"Then to the Faubourg St. Antoine."

Upon that the coachman was directed to proceed to the Luxembourg, instead of to the Palais Royal.

## CHAPTER II.

### DECIDEDLY THE FAMILY BEGINS TO SETTLE DOWN.

WHATEVER the regent might say, the Duchesse de Berri was his favorite daughter. At seven years of age she had been seized with a disease which all the doctors declared to be fatal; and when they had abandoned her, her father, who had studied medicine, took her in hand himself, and succeeded in saving her. From that time the regent's affection for his daughter became almost a weakness. He allowed the haughty and self-willed child unfettered liberty to do as she pleased. Her education was neglected, but this did not prevent Louis XIV. from choosing her as a wife for his grandson the Duc de Berri.

It is well known how death at once struck a triple blow at the royal posterity, and within a few years carried off the Dauphin, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne, and the Duc de Berri.

Left a widow at twenty years of age, loving her father almost as tenderly as he loved her, and having to choose between the society of Versailles and that of the Palais Royal, the Duchesse de Berri, young, beautiful, and fond of pleasure, had quickly decided. She took part in all the fêtes, the pleasures, and follies of her father.

The Duc d'Orléans, in his increasing fondness for his daughter — who already had six hundred thousand francs a year — allowed her four hundred thousand francs more from his private fortune. He gave up the Luxembourg to her, gave her a body-guard; and at length, to the

scandal of those who advocated the old forms of etiquette, he merely shrugged his shoulders when the Duchesse de Berri passed through Paris preceded by cymbals and trumpets, and only laughed when she received the Venetian ambassador on a throne, raised on three steps, — which nearly embroiled France with the republic of Venice.

About this time the Duchesse de Berri took a fancy to fall in love with the Chevalier de Riom.

The Chevalier de Riom, who came to Paris in 1715 to seek his fortune, and found it at the Luxembourg, was a nephew or grand-nephew of the Duc de Lauzun. Introduced to the princess by Madame de Mouchy, he soon established the same influence over her as his uncle, the Duc de Lauzun, had exercised over La Grande Mademoiselle fifty years before, and was soon established as her lover, supplanting Lahaie, who was sent on an embassy to Denmark.

The duchess had the singular moderation of never having had more than two lovers, — Lahaie, whom she had never avowed, and Riom, whom she proclaimed aloud.

This was by no means a sufficient cause for the furious hostility with which the poor princess was pursued. There was, we must remember, another cause, assigned not only by Saint-Simon, but in all the histories of that period; it was that fatal ride through Paris, with cymbals and trumpets, that unfortunate throne on which she had received the Venetian ambassador, — in short, her bodyguard and her extraordinary pretensions.

But it was not that general indignation excited by the princess which had moved the Duc d'Orléans to anger with his daughter; it was the control of her lover to which she had yielded. Riom had been brought up by the Duc de Lauzun, who in the morning had crushed the hand of the Princesse de Monaco with the heel of the

boot which in the evening he made the daughter of Gaston d'Orléans pull off, and who had given his nephew the following instruction, which Riom had fully carried out: "The daughters of France," said he, "must be treated with a high hand;" and Riom, trusting to his uncle's experience, had so well schooled the Duchesse de Berri, that she scarcely dared to give a fête without his advice, to appear at the opera without his permission, or to put on a dress without his direction.

The duke took as strong a dislike to Riom as his careless character allowed him to take to any one, and under pretext of serving the duchess, had given him a regiment, then the government of Cognac, then the order to retire to his government, which almost made his favors look like disfavors and disgrace.

The duchess was not deceived. She went to her father, begged, prayed, and scolded, but in vain; and she went away threatening the duke with her anger, and declaring that Riom should not go. The duke's only reply was to repeat his orders for Riom's departure the next day, and Riom had respectfully promised to obey.

The same day, which was the one preceding that on which our story opens, Riom had ostensibly set out, and Dubois himself had told the duke that he had left for Cognac at nine o'clock. Meanwhile the duke had not again seen his daughter; thus, when he spoke of going to finish with her, it was rather a pardon than a quarrel that he went to seek.

Dubois had not been duped by this pretended resolution; but Riom was gone, and that was all he wanted. He hoped to slip in some new personage who should efface all memory of Riom, who was to be sent to join the Maréchal de Berwick in Spain, and would thenceforth be as far out of the way as Lahaie was in Denmark.

The carriage stopped before the Luxembourg, which was lighted as usual. The duke ascended the steps with his usual celerity; Dubois, whom the duchess hated, remained in a corner of the carriage. Presently the duke appeared at the door with a disappointed air.

"Ah, Monseigneur," said Dubois, "are you refused admittance?"

"No; the duchess is not here."

"Where, then, — at the Carmelites?"

"No; at Meudon."

"At Meudon, in February, and in such weather! Monseigneur, such love of the country seems to me suspicious."

"And to me also, I confess. What in the devil is she doing at Meudon?"

"It is easy to find out."

"How?"

"Let us go to Meudon."

"To Meudon!" said the regent to the coachman, jumping into the carriage; "I allow you twenty-five minutes to get there."

"I would remind Monseigneur," said the coachman, humbly, "that the horses have already gone ten leagues."

"Kill them, but be at Meudon in twenty-five minutes."

There was no reply to be made to such an order; the coachman whipped his horses, and the noble animals set out at as brisk a pace as if they had just left the stable.

Throughout the drive Dubois was silent, and the regent thoughtful; there was nothing on the route to arrest the attention of either, and when they arrived at Meudon the duke had found no clear way through the contradictory reflections that occupied his mind.

This time both alighted. Dubois, thinking the interview might be protracted, was anxious to find a more comfortable waiting-place than a carriage.

At the door they found a Swiss in full livery; he stopped them. The duke made himself known.

"Pardon," said the Swiss, "I did not know that Monseigneur was expected."

"Expected or not, I am here. Send word to the princess."

"Monseigneur is to be at the ceremony?" asked the Swiss, who seemed embarrassed.

"Yes, of course," put in Dubois, stopping the duke, who was about to ask what ceremony; "and I also."

"Then shall I lead Monseigneur at once to the chapel?"

"To the chapel?" asked the duke.

"Yes, Monseigneur; for the ceremony is already begun."

"Ah, Dubois," said the duke, "is she also going to take the veil?"

"Monseigneur," said Dubois, "I should rather say she is going to be married."

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed the regent, "that would crown all;" and he darted toward the staircase, followed by Dubois.

"Does not Monseigneur wish me to guide him?" asked the Swiss.

"It is needless," cried the regent; "I know the way."

Indeed — with an agility surprising in so corpulent a man — the regent darted through the rooms and corridors, followed by Dubois, and arrived at the door of the chapel, which appeared to be closed, but yielded to the first touch.

Dubois had not been mistaken in his conjectures.

Riom, who had returned secretly, was on his knees with the princess before the private chaplain of the Luxembourg, while Monsieur de Pons, Riom's relative, and the Marquis de la Rochefoucault, captain of the princess's

guard, held the canopy over their heads. Messieurs de Mouchy and de Lauzun stood, one by the duchess and the other by Riom.

"Certainly fortune is against us, Monseigneur," said Dubois; "we are two minutes too late."

"*Mordieu!*" cried the duke, exasperated, "we will see."

"Chut," said Dubois; "I cannot permit sacrilege. If it were of any use, I would n't object; but this would be mere folly."

"Are they married, then?" asked the duke, drawing back.

"So much married, Monseigneur, that the Devil himself cannot unmarry them, without the assistance of the Pope."

"I will write to Rome!"

"Take care, Monseigneur! do not waste your influence; you will want it all to get me made a cardinal."

"But," exclaimed the regent, "such a marriage is intolerable."

"Mésalliances are in fashion," said Dubois; "there is nothing else talked of. Louis XIV. made a mésalliance in marrying Madame de Maintenon, to whom you pay a pension as his widow. La Grande Mademoiselle made a mésalliance in marrying the Duc de Lauzun; you did so in marrying Mademoiselle de Blois, — so much so, indeed, that when you announced the marriage to your mother, the princess palatine, she replied by a blow. Did not I do the same when I married the daughter of a village schoolmaster? After such good examples, why should not your daughter do so in her turn?"

"Silence, demon!" said the regent.

"Besides," continued Dubois, "the Duchesse de Berri's passion began to be talked about, and this will quiet the

talk; for it will be known all through Paris to-morrow. Decidedly, Monseigneur, your family begins to settle down."

The Duc d'Orléans uttered an oath, to which Dubois replied by a laugh which Mephistopheles might have envied.

"Silence there!" cried a Swiss, who did not know who it was that was making a noise, and did not wish the pious exhortation of the chaplain to be lost.

"Silence, Monseigneur," repeated Dubois; "you are disturbing the ceremony."

"You will see," replied the duke, "that if we are not silent she will have us turned out."

"Silence!" repeated the Swiss, striking the flag-stone with his halberd, while the Duchesse de Berri sent Monsieur de Mouchy to learn who was causing the disturbance.

Monsieur de Mouchy obeyed the orders of the princess, and perceiving two persons who appeared to be concealing themselves in the shade, he approached them haughtily.

"Who is making this noise?" said he; "and who gave you permission to enter this chapel?"

"One who has a great mind to send you all out by the window," replied the regent, "but who will content himself at present with begging you to order Monsieur de Riom to set out at once for Cognac, and to intimate to the Duchesse de Berri that she had better absent herself from the Palais Royal."

The regent went out, signing to Dubois to follow, and leaving Monsieur de Mouchy in a state of terror.

"To the Palais Royal!" said the prince, stepping hastily into his carriage.

"To the Palais Royal?" replied Dubois, quickly. "By no means, Monseigneur; you forget our agreement. I have come with you on condition that you, in your turn,

should go with me. Coachman, to the Faubourg St. Antoine!"

"Go to the devil! I am not hungry."

"Well, then, your Highness will not eat."

"I am not in a mood to be amused."

"Very well, your Highness will not be amused."

"And what shall I do, then, if I neither eat nor amuse myself?"

"Your Highness will see others eat and amuse themselves, — that is all."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that God is in the way of working miracles for you, Monseigneur; and since that is not an every-day matter, you ought not to hurry away. We have seen two already this evening, and now we are going to see a third."

"A third?"

"Yes; *numero Deus impare gaudet*, — God finds pleasure in odd numbers. I hope you have n't forgotten your Latin, Monseigneur!"

"Come, explain yourself," said the regent, who at that moment was not at all inclined to pleasantry. "You, indeed, are ugly enough to pose for the Sphynx, but I am not young enough for the rôle of Œdipus."

"Well, then, Monseigneur, what I would say is that after seeing your two daughters, who were too wild, take their first step in sobriety, you are about to see your son, who was too sober, take his first step in folly."

"My son Louis?"

"Your son Louis in person. To-night he is to make his début, Monseigneur; and that is the spectacle, so flattering to paternal pride, to which I have invited you."

The duke shook his head with an air of doubt.

"Oh, shake your head as much as you please, Monseigneur, — it is so," said Dubois.

"And in what way does he make his début?"

"In every way, Monseigneur, and I have directed Chevalier de M —— to take charge of his first campaign. Just now he is at supper with the chevalier and two women."

"Who are the women?" asked the regent.

"I know but one of them; the chevalier undertook to secure the other."

"And Louis has consented?"

"With ardor and gratitude."

"Upon my soul, Dubois, I believe that if you had lived in the time of King Saint-Louis you would have brought him at last to acquaintance with the Fillon of the period."

A smile of triumph passed over the monkey-face of Dubois. "Monseigneur," said he, "you wished that Monsieur Louis should once draw the sword, as you formerly did, and as you are still eager to do. My plans are laid to that end."

"Really?"

"Yes; while they are at supper the chevalier will start a nice little quarrel with him, in the German style; you can count on him for that. You wished also that Monsieur Louis should engage in some good love affair; if he resist the siren I have turned loose on him he is a Saint Anthony."

"Did you select her yourself?"

"How can you ask, Monseigneur? When the affair touches the honor of your family, your Highness well knows that I am wont to rely on myself alone. So, then, to-night the orgy, to-morrow morning the duel; and by to-morrow evening our neophyte can sign himself Louis d'Orléans without compromising his august mother. For every one will see that the young man is of your blood, —

which, the devil take me! his present strange behavior might lead one to doubt."

"Dubois, you are a rascal!" said the duke, laughing for the first time since he left Chelles; "you will ruin the son as you have ruined the father."

"Take it as you please, Monseigneur," replied Dubois; "he must be a prince or not a prince, — man or monk. It is time he made his choice. You have but one son, Monseigneur, — a son now nearly sixteen years old. You refrain from sending him into action on the pretext that he is your only son, but in reality because you are in doubt how he would acquit himself — "

"Dubois!" said the regent.

"Well, to-morrow, Monseigneur, all will be arranged."

"*Pardieu!* — a fine affair!" said the regent.

"So, then," replied Dubois, "you think he will acquit himself with honor?"

"Ah, knave, do you know that you are insulting me? It seems that it is an impossible thing to make a man of my blood amorous, and a miracle most extraordinary to induce a prince of my name to draw his sword! Dubois, my friend, you were born abbé and you will die abbé."

"Not at all, not at all, Monseigneur!" cried Dubois. "*Peste!* I am looking higher than that."

The regent laughed. "At any rate," said he, "you have ambition, — unlike that imbecile Louis, who wishes for nothing; and that ambition of yours amuses me more than you can imagine."

"Really!" said Dubois; "and yet I had no idea I was so comical."

"Yes, that is your modesty; for you are the most amusing fellow in the world, — when you are not the most perverse. I assure you, then, that on the day when you become archbishop — "

"Cardinal, Monseigneur."

"Ah! you want to be a cardinal?"

"While waiting to be pope."

"Very good; well, I assure you that on that day —"

"The day when I shall become pope?"

"No; I assure you that on the day that sees you made a cardinal, there will be great laughing at the Palais Royal."

"They will laugh in another way at Paris, Monseigneur; but, as you have said, I am sometimes comical, and I wish to be amusing, — that is why I aim to be a cardinal."

As Dubois uttered these words the carriage stopped.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE RAT AND THE MOUSE.[1]

THE carriage had stopped in the Faubourg St. Antoine, before a house concealed by a high wall, behind which rose several poplars, as if to hide that house from the walls themselves.

"Hold!" said the regent; "it seems to me that Nocé's house is somewhere in this neighborhood."

"Precisely; Monseigneur has a good memory, — I have borrowed it for to-night."

"You have at least made your preparations carefully, Dubois? The supper is worthy of a prince of the blood?"

"I have myself directed the whole affair. Ah, Monsieur Louis will lack nothing; he is attended by his father's lackeys, is served by his father's cook, makes love to —"

"To whom?"

"You will see; the devil take it! I must leave you one surprise."

"And what of the wine?"

"The wine is from your own cellar, Monseigneur. I hope those family liquors will make the family blood speak truly; it has spoken falsely long enough."

"You did n't have so much trouble in making mine speak, did you, corrupter?"

[1] The relation of this title to the chapter which follows is lost in translation. In the original the title is "*Le Rat et la Souris.*" — TR.

"I am eloquent, Monseigneur, but must admit that you were susceptible. Let us go in."

"You have a key, then?"

"Of course!" And Dubois took a key from his pocket, and carefully inserted it in the lock. The door turned noiselessly on its hinges, and closed again as silently, after admitting the duke and his minister, — a proper door, which knew what was due from it to men of rank. The house appeared to be illuminated, and in the vestibule the illustrious visitors were apprised by lackeys in waiting that the banquet had already commenced.

"You triumph, Abbé," said the regent.

"Let us get to our place at once, Monseigneur," replied Dubois. "I confess that I am eager to see how Monsieur Louis conducts himself."

"So, too, am I," said the regent.

"Follow me, then, — and no talking."

The regent silently followed Dubois to a cabinet which communicated with the dining-room by a large, arched opening. This opening was filled with flowers, between the stems of which one could easily see and hear the party at supper.

"Ah," said the regent, recognizing the cabinet, "I am at home here."

"More so than you think, Monseigneur; but don't forget that whatever you may see, and whatever you may hear, you are to remain silent, or at least, speak in a low tone."

"You may rest easy on that score."

They drew near to the arched opening, took their places, kneeling on a sofa, and parted the flowers before them, so that they might lose nothing of what should occur.

The regent's son, fifteen and a half years old, sat in an

armchair facing his father. On the other side of the table, with his back turned toward the two spectators, was the Chevalier de M——. Two women, dressed somewhat showily, completed the party. One of them sat near the prince, the other near the chevalier. The host, who drank nothing, was delivering a speech. The woman near him was making wry faces and yawning.

"Ah, what!" said the duke, who was near-sighted, trying to recognize the woman who sat facing him, "it seems to me I know that face;" and he gazed at the woman with searching eyes. Dubois laughed to himself.

"But see, then," continued the regent, — "a woman of dark complexion with blue eyes! —"

"A woman of dark complexion with blue eyes," Dubois repeated. "Go on, Monseigneur."

"That ravishing form, those delicate hands!"

"Go on."

"That little rose-colored nose!"

"Still go on."

"Why, *corbleu!* I am not mistaken; it is La Souris!"

"Well, then?"

"What, you scoundrel, you have gone so far as to choose La Souris!"

"A most delightful girl, Monseigneur, — a nymph of the opera; there is nothing better, it seems to me, for waking up a young man."

"This, then, was the surprise you reserved for me when you told me that he was attended by his father's lackeys, that he drank his father's wine, and that he made love to —"

"To his father's mistress; yes, Monseigneur, it is precisely that."

"But, scoundrel," cried the duke, "it is almost an incest that you are preparing there!"

"Bah!" said Dubois, "since he is to be launched —"

"And the rogue accepts these attentions?"

"It is her business, Monseigneur."

"And with whom does she think she is?"

"With a gentleman from the country, who has come to Paris to spend his inheritance."

"Who is her companion?"

"Ah, as to that, I am absolutely ignorant. Chevalier de M —— undertook to complete the party."

At that moment the woman who was sitting next the chevalier, thinking she heard whispering behind her, turned around.

"Eh! what!" cried Dubois, stupefied in his turn, "I am not mistaken!"

"What is it?"

"The other woman —"

"Well, the other woman?"

The pretty guest turned around again.

"It is Julie!" cried Dubois, — "the wretch!"

"Ah, *pardieu!*" said the duke; "this makes the thing quite complete, — your mistress and mine! Upon my soul, I would give much to be able to laugh at my ease."

"Wait, Monseigneur, wait!"

"Well, are you crazy? What the devil are you going to do, Dubois? I command you to stay. I am curious to see what will come of it all."

"I obey you, Monseigneur," said Dubois; "but I declare to you one thing."

"What is that?"

"That I believe no longer in the virtue of women."

"Dubois," said the regent, leaning back on the sofa, while Dubois did the same, "upon my honor, you are adorable! Let me laugh, or I shall choke."

"Faith, Monseigneur, let us laugh, but let us laugh gently. You are right, we must see how this will end."

They both laughed as noiselessly as they could, after which they resumed the observant attitudes which they had abandoned for a moment.

Poor La Souris was yawning as if she would dislocate her jaw.

"Do you notice, Monseigneur," said Dubois, "that Monsieur Louis seems not to be excited in the slightest degree?"

"That is to say, one would think he had not been drinking."

"And those empty bottles which we see there, do you imagine that they have emptied themselves?"

"You are right; and yet the gentleman is very grave."

"Have patience, then; ah, he rouses himself. Listen, he is about to speak."

In fact, the young duke, sitting up in his chair, pushed back with his hand the bottle offered him by La Souris. "I have wished," said he, sententiously, "to see what an orgy is; I have seen, and I am but little pleased. A sage has said, 'Ebrietas omne vitium deliquit.'"

"What in the devil is he singing there?" asked the duke.

"The affair is not going on well," said Dubois.

"What, Monsieur!" cried the young duke's companion, with a smile that exhibited a row of teeth more beautiful than pearls, — "what! you do not like to eat?"

"I like neither to eat nor to drink," replied Monsieur Louis, "when I am neither hungry nor thirsty."

"The fool!" muttered the regent, turning toward Dubois, who bit his lips.

The chevalier began to laugh, and said, "You make an

exception, I trust, in favor of the society of our charming companions?"

"What do you mean to say, Monsieur?"

"Ah, he is getting angry," said the regent. "Good!"

"Good!" replied Dubois.

"I would say, Monsieur," replied the chevalier, "that you will not disparage these ladies by showing your indifference to their society, in withdrawing thus early."

"It is late, Monsieur," said Louis d'Orléans.

"Bah!" replied the chevalier, "it is not yet midnight."

"And besides," said the duke, seeking an excuse, "and besides — I am betrothed."

The ladies burst out laughing.

"What a stupid animal!" murmured Dubois.

"Indeed!" said the regent.

"Ah, it is true; I forgot, — pardon, Monseigneur."

"My dear fellow," said the chevalier, "you are frightfully rural."

"Ah," said the regent, "what the devil does that young man mean in speaking so to a prince of the blood?"

"He is supposed not to know that he is a prince, and to believe that he is an ordinary gentleman; besides, I charged the chevalier to stir him up."

"Your pardon, Monsieur," rejoined the young prince; "you were speaking, I think; but Madame addressed me at the same moment, and I did not hear what you said."

"And do you wish me to repeat what I said?" replied the young man, with a sneer.

"You will do me a pleasure."

"Very well, I said that you are frightfully rural."

"I congratulate myself, Monsieur, if I am thus set apart from certain Parisian customs I have observed," replied Monsieur Louis.

"Come, come, not badly retorted," said the duke.

"Pooh!" said Dubois.

"If you mean that for me, Monsieur, I will reply that you are not polite, — which is a matter of no consequence in regard to me, to whom you can render an explanation of your impoliteness, but which, as toward these ladies, is without excuse."

"Your challenger goes too far, Abbé," said the duke, uneasily; "they will be cutting each other's throats."

"Very well, we will stop them," said Dubois.

The young prince retained his composure; he rose, and going round to the other side of the table approached the chevalier and spoke to him in quiet tones.

"Do you see?" said the duke, excitedly, to Dubois. "We must take care, Abbé; what the devil! I don't want him killed!"

But Louis contented himself with saying to the young man: "Can you say, Monsieur, with your hand on your conscience, that you are amused in this place? For my part, I declare, I am horribly bored. If we were alone I would speak to you on a question of considerable importance which occupies my mind at this moment; it refers to the sixth chapter of 'the Confessions of Saint Augustine.'"

"What, Monsieur!" said the chevalier, with an air of stupefaction, which was not at all pretended, "you occupy your mind with religion? It is too soon, it seems to me —"

"Monsieur," said the prince, gravely, "it is never too soon to think of one's salvation."

The regent breathed a deep sigh; Dubois rubbed the end of his nose.

"Faith of a gentleman!" said the regent, "he dishonors the race; the women are going to sleep!"

"Wait," said Dubois; "perhaps if they sleep he will be bolder."

"*Ventrebleu!*" said the regent, "if he could be made bold it would be done already; she has cast glances at him which would rouse the dead. Hold! look! lying back in that armchair, is she not charming?"

"Wait," said Louis; "I must consult you about that. Saint Jerome affirms that grace is not really efficacious except upon repentance."

"The devil fly away with you!" cried the gentleman; "if you had been drinking I should say that you were drunk."

"This time, Monsieur," replied the young prince, "it is my turn to ask you to observe that you are impolite; and I would reply to you in the same tone were it not a sin even to take notice of insults. But, thank God, I am a better Christian than you are!"

"At a banquet," replied the chevalier, "the question is not whether one is a good Christian, but whether one is a good companion. Plague take your companionship! I should prefer Saint Augustine himself, even after his conversion."

The young duke rang, and a lackey responded to the summons.

"Conduct and light, Monsieur," said the prince, with a regal air. "As to myself, I will set out in a quarter of an hour. Chevalier, have you your carriage?"

"Faith, no."

"In that case make use of mine. Very sorry I am not able to cultivate your acquaintance; but, as I have told you, your tastes are not mine, — and besides, I am returning to my province."

"*Pardieu!*" said Dubois, "it would be strange if he sent away his companion so that he might remain alone with the two women."

"Yes," said the duke, "it would be strange; but it is not the case."

While the duke and Dubois were talking the chevalier had withdrawn, and Louis, left alone with the two women actually asleep, having taken from his pockets a large roll of paper and a small red pencil, applied himself with theological ardor to making marginal notes, — in the midst of plates still smoking and bottles half empty.

"If that prince yonder ever gives offence to the elder branch," said the regent, "I shall be surprised. Let any one say now that I bring up my children to expect the throne."

"Monseigneur," said Dubois, "I swear to you that I am sick of it."

"Ah, Dubois, my younger daughter a Jansenist, my elder daughter a philosopher, my only son a theologian, — I am bedevilled, Dubois! My word of honor, if I do not control myself I shall have those evil-doers burned."

"Take care, Monseigneur; if you have them burned it will be said that you are continuing the rôle of the great king and La Maintenon."

"Let them live, then. But mark you, Dubois, that idiot, who writes books already, is enough to drive one distracted. You will see that when I am dead he will have my pictures of Daphnis and Chloe burned by the executioner."

Louis d'Orléans continued his annotations for about ten minntes. Then, when he had finished, he carefully replaced the manuscript in his pocket, turned out a full glass of water, dipped in it a crust of bread, devoutly made his little prayer, and with a sort of voluptuous pleasure ate that supper of an anchorite.

"Macerations!" murmured the regent in despair. "But I ask you, Dubois, who in the devil taught him that?"

"Not I, Monseigneur," said Dubois; "you may be assured."

The prince rose and rang once more. "Has the carriage returned?" he asked the lackey.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"It is well; I am going. As to these ladies, you see that they are asleep; when they wake you will obey their orders."

The lackey bowed, and the prince went out with the air of an archbishop giving his benediction.

"The plague choke you for having made me witness such a spectacle!" said the regent, in despair.

"Happy father!" replied Dubois; "thrice happy father that you are, Monseigneur! Your children are saints by instinct, — and there are those who calumniate this holy family! By my cardinal's hat, I wish the lawful princes were here!"

"Very good! I would show them how a father repairs the wrongs done by his son. Come, Dubois."

"I don't understand you, Monseigneur."

"Dubois, the devil take me! the contagion has reached you."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. Here is a supper served ready to be eaten; here is wine uncorked for drinking; here are two sleeping women to be aroused, — and you don't understand! Dubois, I am hungry! Dubois I am thirsty! Let us go in and take up the affair where that imbecile dropped it. Do you understand now?"

"Faith, that is an idea," said Dubois, rubbing his hands; "and you alone, Monseigneur, are always up to the height of your reputation."

The two women were still asleep. Dubois and the regent left their place of concealment, and entered the

dining-room. The regent sat in his son's place, and Dubois in that of the chevalier. The regent cut the cord of a bottle of champagne, and the noise of the popping cork aroused the sleepers.

"Ah, you have concluded, then, at last, to drink?" said La Souris.

"And you have concluded to wake up?" replied the duke.

His voice struck the poor woman's ear like an electric shock. She rubbed her eyes as if doubtful whether she were awake; she sat up, and recognizing the regent fell back in her chair, murmuring twice the name of Julie. As to the latter, she seemed fascinated by Dubois's jeering grimaces.

"Come, come, La Souris," said the duke; "I see that you are a good girl, — you have given me the preference. I got Dubois to invite you to supper; you had a thousand affairs on hand, and yet you accepted."

The companion of La Souris, even more frightened, looked at Dubois, the prince, and La Souris, blushed, and lost countenance.

"What is the matter, Mademoiselle Julie?" asked Dubois. "Is it possible that Monseigneur is mistaken; and did you come here to meet others instead of us?"

"I do not say so," replied Julie.

La Souris began to laugh. "If it is Monseigneur," she said, "who invited us, he knows all about it, and has no questions to ask; if it is not he, he is indiscreet, and I have nothing to reply."

"Very good! I told you," said the duke, laughing heartily, — "I told you she was a girl of intelligence."

"And I, Monseigneur," said Dubois, filling glasses for the ladies, and sipping champagne, — "I told you that the wine was excellent."

"Come, La Souris," said the regent, "do you not recognize that wine?"

"Faith, Monseigneur, it is with wine as with lovers."

"Yes, I understand; your memory is not comprehensive enough. Certainly, Souris, you are not only the most courageous, but also the most honest girl I know. Ah, you are not a hypocrite," continued the duke, with a sigh.

"Well, Monseigneur, if you take it like that —"

"Well, what?"

"It is I who will question you."

"Ask your questions; I will answer."

"Do you know the meaning of dreams, Monseigneur?"

"I am a diviner."

"Can you, then, explain mine to me?"

"Better than any one else, Souris. Besides, if I should come short in my interpretation, here is the abbé, who draws on me for two millions a year for certain secret expenses, the object of which is to discover what dreams, good and bad, are dreamed in my kingdom."

"Well?"

"Well, if I come short the abbé will finish. So tell me your dream."

"Monseigneur, you know that Julie and I, tired of waiting for you, fell asleep."

"Yes, I am aware of it; you were sleeping soundly when we came in."

"Well, Monseigneur, I not only slept, — I dreamed."

"Really?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; I don't know whether Julie dreamed or not, but as for me, this is what I thought I saw —"

"Listen, Dubois; this promises to be interesting."

"In the place now occupied by Monsieur l'Abbé sat an

officer, to whom I gave but little attention. He seemed to be there for Julie."

"You hear, Mademoiselle?" said Dubois; "this is a terrible accusation brought against you."

Julie, who was not self-confident, and who in contrast with La Souris, whose adventures she commonly shared, was called the Rat, — instead of making any reply, only blushed.

"And in my place what did you see?" asked the duke.

"Ah, I was just coming to that. In the place where Monseigneur now is, there was — in my dream, you understand —"

"Of course!" said the duke; "that is understood."

"There was a handsome young man, fifteen or sixteen years old, but so strange that if he had not talked Latin he might have passed for a young girl."

"Ah, my poor Souris," cried the duke, "what are you telling me?"

"In short, after an hour of theological conversation, dissertations of the highest interest on Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine, very luminous expositions on Jansenius, — on my word, Monseigneur, I confess, it seemed to me (still in my dream) that I fell asleep."

"So that at that moment you dreamed that you dreamed?"

"Yes; and that seems to me so complicated that, curious for an interpretation, unable to find one by myself, and thinking it useless to consult Julie, I apply to you, Monseigneur, who are a great diviner, — you have told me so yourself, — to obtain that interpretation."

"Souris," said the duke, filling her glass full anew, "taste seriously of this wine; I think that you calumniate te."

"Indeed, Monseigneur," replied La Souris, emptying her glass, "this wine reminds me of a wine that I have had only —"

"Only at the Palais Royal?"

"Faith, yes!"

"Well, if you have had that wine only at the Palais Royal, it is because there only can it be found. You have had experience enough to be able to render that justice to my cellar."

"Oh, I do, with all my heart."

"Now, then, if that wine can be procured only at the Palais Royal, it follows that it is I who have sent it hither."

"You, Monseigneur?"

"I or Dubois. You know that besides having a key to the purse, he has also a key to the cellar."

"A key to the cellar, perhaps," said Mademoiselle Julie, who at length decided to venture a remark, "but no one would suspect he had a key to the purse."

"Do you hear, Dubois?" cried the regent.

"Monseigneur," said the abbé, "as your Highness may have observed, the child doesn't speak often, but when she does she says something."

"If I sent the wine hither it could be only for a Duc d'Orléans."

"Why, are there two of them?" asked La Souris.

"To be sure."

"The son and the father, — Louis d'Orléans, Philippe d'Orléans."

"You burn, La Souris, you burn!"

"What!" cried La Souris, throwing herself back in her chair, and laughing hilariously, — "that young man, that young girl, that theologian, that Jansenist —"

"Go on."

"Whom I saw in my dream?"

"Yes."

"There, in your place?"

"In the very place where I am."

"Was Monseigneur Louis d'Orléans?"

"In person."

"Ah, Monseigneur," replied La Souris, "how little your son resembles you; and how glad I am to be awakened!"

"It is not so with me," said Julie.

"Good! What did I tell you, Monseigneur?" cried the abbé. "Julie, my child, you are worth your weight in gold."

"So, then," said the regent, "you still love me, Souris?"

"The fact is that I have a weakness for you, Monseigneur."

"In spite of your dreams?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, and sometimes even because of my dreams."

"That is not very flattering if all your dreams are like those of to-night."

"Ah, I beg your Highness to believe that I don't have the nightmare every night."

Upon that response, which still further confirmed his Royal Highness in the opinion that La Souris was a girl of intelligence, the interrupted supper was resumed with great zeal, and was continued till three o'clock in the morning. At that hour the regent took La Souris to the Palais Royal in his son's carriage, while Dubois attended Julie to her own abode in the carriage of Monseigneur.

But before going to bed, the regent, who had hardly conquered the melancholy against which he had struggled through all the evening, wrote a letter, and rang for his

valet. "Take care," he said, "that this letter is despatched this very morning by a special messenger, and that it is delivered only to the person to whom it is addressed."

That letter was addressed to "Madame Ursule, Superior of the Ursulines at Clisson."

## CHAPTER IV.

### WHAT HAPPENED THREE NIGHTS LATER, THREE HUNDRED LEAGUES FROM THE PALAIS ROYAL.

THREE nights after that on which we have seen the regent, as if in quest of successive disappointments, go from Paris to Chelles, from Chelles to Meudon, and from Meudon to the Faubourg St. Antoine, an event occurred in the environs of Nantes which cannot be omitted in this history; we will therefore exercise our privilege of transporting the reader to that place.

On the road to Clisson, two or three miles from Nantes, near the convent made famous by Abelard's sojourn there, was a large dark house, surrounded by thick, stunted trees; hedges everywhere surrounded the inclosure outside the walls, — hedges impervious to the sight, and interrupted only by a wicket-gate.

This gate led into a garden, at the end of which was a wall having a small, massive door, always closed. From a distance this grave and dismal residence appeared like a prison. It was, however, a convent full of young Augustines, subject to a rule lenient as compared with provincial customs, but rigid as compared with those of Versailles and Paris.

The house was inaccessible on three sides, but the fourth, which did not face the road, abutted on a large sheet of water; and ten feet above its surface were the windows of the refectory.

This little lake was carefully guarded, and was surrounded by high wooden palisades. A single iron gate opened into it, and at the same time gave a passage to the waters of a small rivulet which fed the lake, and the water had egress at the opposite end.

In the summer a small boat was seen on the water; it belonged to the gardener, who used it as a fishing-boat.

Sometimes, also, in summer, on dark nights, the river gate was mysteriously opened, and a man, wrapped in a large brown cloak, silently dropped into the little boat, which appeared to detach itself from its fastenings, then glided quietly along, and stopped under one of the barred windows of the refectory. Then a signal was given, — a sound like the croaking of a frog or the cry of the owl, — and a young girl appeared at the window and passed her head through the opening between the bars, which were, however, too high for the man to reach. A low and tender conversation was then carried on. After an hour spent in this manner they began their farewells, which lasted another hour. Finally, when they had agreed upon another night and a new signal, they separated, the boat disappeared, the gate shut gently, and the young girl closed the window with a sigh.

But now it was the month of February, and in the terrible winter of 1719. The trees were powdered with hoar frost, and it was at this time impossible to reach the convent in a boat, for the lake was covered with ice.

In this biting cold, in this dark, starless night, a cavalier went forth alone from Nantes, directing his course into the open country and along a cross-road which led to Clisson. He threw the reins on the neck of his horse, which proceeded at a slow and careful pace.

Soon, however, in spite of his instinctive precaution, the poor animal stumbled against a stone and nearly fell. The

rider soon perceived that his horse was lamed, and on seeing a trail of blood upon the snow, discovered that it was wounded.

The young man appeared seriously annoyed at the accident. While deliberating what course to take, he thought he heard a sound of horses' feet on the same road. He listened a moment to satisfy himself that he was not mistaken; and then, convinced beyond doubt that several men on horseback were following him, and perceiving that if perchance they were pursuing him he could not escape them, he remounted his horse, went aside behind some fallen trees, put his sword under his arm, drew a pistol, and waited.

The horsemen arrived, riding at full speed; their dark forms and the white horse of one of them were distinguishable in the obscurity. They were four in number, and proceeded in silence. The unknown held his breath, and the horse — as if he knew his master's danger — remained motionless and silent. Hearing no noise, the horsemen passed by the group of trees which hid horse and cavalier; and the latter thought for a moment that he had escaped them. But suddenly they came to a pause. He who seemed to be their chief dismounted, took a dark lantern from under his cloak, and examined the road. Not finding there the track they had followed, he concluded that they had passed by the object of pursuit. Returning, therefore, upon their steps, they soon discovered the place where the cavalier and his horse had gone aside from the road. He who carried the lantern took a few steps forward at that point, and when he directed his light toward the group of trees, the little troop could easily distinguish a man and a horse. At once there was a noise of cocking istols.

"Holloa, gentlemen!" said the cavalier with the wounded

horse, taking the initiative; "who are you, and what do you want?"

"It is he," murmured two or three voices. "We were not mistaken."

The man with the lantern advanced toward the cavalier.

"Move one step farther and I kill you, Monsieur," said the cavalier. "Declare your name at once, that I may know with whom I have to deal."

"Shoot no one, Gaston de Chanlay," replied the man with the lantern, calmly; "and put up your pistols."

"Ah! it is you, Marquis de Pontcalec?"

"Yes, Monsieur; it is I."

"And what do you come here for, may I ask?"

"To demand some explanation of your conduct. Approach and reply, if you please."

"The invitation is given in strange fashion, Marquis. If you wish for an answer, could you not offer it in other terms?"

"Approach, Gaston," said another voice; "we really wish to speak with you, my dear fellow."

"Ah!" said Chanlay, "I recognize you there, Montlouis; but I confess I am not yet accustomed to the manners of Monsieur de Pontcalec."

"My manners are those of a frank and open Breton, Monsieur," replied the marquis, — "of one who has nothing to hide from his friends, and is willing to be questioned as freely as he questions others."

"I join Montlouis," said another voice, "in begging Gaston to explain amicably. Surely it is not our interest to quarrel among ourselves."

"Thanks, Du Couëdic," said De Chanlay, "I am of the same opinion; so here I am." And sheathing his sword on hearing these more amicable words, the young man issued from his retreat and approached the group.

"Monsieur de Talhouet," said Pontcalec, in the tone of a man who has a right to issue commands, "see that no one approaches without our being warned."

Monsieur de Talhouet obeyed, and began to ride around the group in a great circle, keeping both eyes and ears open.

"And now," said the marquis, mounting his horse, "let us put out our lantern, since we have found our man!"

"Gentlemen," said De Chanlay, "all this seems to me somewhat strange. It appears that you were following me. It is I whom you were seeking, you say; and now that you have found me you can put out your lantern. Come, now, tell me the meaning of all this; if it is a joke, I confess I think both time and place ill-chosen."

"No, Monsieur," replied Pontcalec, in his hard, dry voice, "it is not a joke; it is an interrogatory."

"An interrogatory?" said De Chanlay, frowning.

"That is to say, an explanation," said Montlouis.

"Interrogatory or explanation, it matters not," said Pontcalec; "the circumstances are too grave for us to argue about words. Monsieur de Chanlay reply to our questions."

"You speak roughly, Marquis de Pontcalec," replied the chevalier.

"If I command, it is because I have the right to do so. Am I, or am I not, your chief?"

"Certainly you are; but that is no reason for forgetting the consideration which one gentleman owes to

r."

sieur de Chanlay, all these objections seem to me
ling. You have sworn to obey, — obey, then!'
vore to obey, Monsieur," replied the chevalier,
ot as a lackey."

"You swore to obey as a slave. Obey, then, or submit to the consequences of your disobedience!"

"Monsieur le Marquis!"

"My dear Gaston," cried Montlouis, "speak, I beg, as soon as possible; by a word you can remove all suspicion."

"All suspicion!" cried Gaston, pale with anger; "you suspect me, then?"

"Why, of course we suspect you," said Pontcalec, with his open rudeness. "Do you think if we did not suspect you we should amuse ourselves by following you on such a night as this?"

"Oh, in that case it is quite another matter!" said Gaston, coldly; "tell me your suspicions, — I listen."

"Chevalier, recall the circumstances. We four were conspiring together, and we did not seek your aid; you offered it, saying that besides being willing to aid in the public good, you had a private revenge to serve. Am I not right?"

"You are."

"We received you — welcomed you as a friend, as a brother; we told you all our hopes, all our plans; nay, more, — you were elected by lot to strike the glorious blow. Each one of us offered to take your place, but you refused. Is it not so?"

"You have spoken the strictest truth, Marquis."

"This very morning we drew the lots; this evening you should be on the road to Paris. Instead of that, where do we find you? On the road to Clisson, where are lodged the mortal enemies of Breton independence, where lives our sworn foe, the Maréchal de Montesquiou."

"Ah, Monsieur," said Gaston, scornfully.

"Reply by open words, and not by sneers; reply Monsieur de Chanlay, and quickly."

"For pity's sake, reply, Gaston," said Du Couëdic and Montlouis, imploringly.

"And to what am I to reply?"

"You are to account for your frequent absences during the last two months; for the mystery which surrounds you; for refusing, as you do, once or twice weekly to join our nightly meetings. We confess, Gaston, all this has made us uneasy; by a word you can reassure us."

"You can see, Monsieur, that you are proved guilty by hiding, instead of pursuing your course."

"I did not pursue my course, because my horse was wounded; you may see the stains of blood upon the road."

"But why did you hide?"

"Because I wished to know first who was pursuing me. Have I not the fear of being arrested, as well as yourselves?"

"In short, where were you going?"

"If you had followed my steps as you have done hitherto, you would have found that my path did not lead to Clisson."

"No more does it lead to Paris."

"Gentlemen, I beg," said De Chanlay, "that you will trust me, and respect my secret, — a secret in which not only my own honor, but that of another, is concerned. You do not know, perhaps, — it may be exaggerated, — how extreme is my delicacy on this point."

"Then it is a love secret?" said Montlouis.

"Yes, and the secret of a first love," replied Gaston.

"All evasions!" cried Pontcalec.

"Marquis," said Gaston, haughtily.

"This is not saying enough, my friend," replied Du Couëdic. "How can we believe that you are going to a rendezvous in such weather, and that this rendezvous is

not at Clisson, — since, except the Augustine Convent, there is not a dwelling-house within two miles."

"Monsieur de Chanlay," said the Marquis de Pontcalec, in an agitated voice, "you swore to obey me as your chief, and to devote soul and body to our holy cause. Monsieur, our undertaking is serious, — our property, our liberties, our lives, and our honor are at stake; will you reply clearly and freely to the questions which I put to you in the name of all, so as to remove all doubts? If not, Gaston de Chanlay, — by virtue of that right which you gave me, of your own free will, over your life, — if not, I declare, on my honor, I will blow out your brains with my own hand!"

A solemn silence followed these words; not one voice was raised to defend Gaston. He looked at each one in turn, and each one turned away from him.

"Marquis," said the chevalier, at length, in a tone of deep feeling, "not only do you insult me by suspicions, but you grieve me by saying that I can remove those suspicions only by declaring my secret. Stay," added he, drawing a pocket-book from his coat, and hastily pencilling a few words on a leaf which he tore out, — "here is the secret you wish to know; I hold it in one hand, and in the other I hold a loaded pistol. Will you make me reparation for the insult you have offered me? If not, in my turn I give you my word as a gentleman that I will shoot myself. When I am dead, open my hand and read this paper; you will then see if I deserved your suspicions."

And Gaston held the pistol to his head with that calm resolution which indicates that action will follow speech.

"Gaston! Gaston!" cried Montlouis, while Du Couëdic held his arm; "stop, in Heaven's name! Marquis, he would do as he said; pardon him, and he will tell us all.

Is it not so, Gaston? You will not have a secret from your brothers, who beg you, in the name of their wives and children, to tell it them."

"Certainly," said the marquis, "I not only pardon but love him; he knows it well. Let him but prove his innocence, and I will make him every reparation; but, before that, nothing. He is young, and alone in the world; he has not, like us, wives and children whose happiness and whose fortune he is risking. He stakes only his own life, and he holds that as cheaply as is usual at twenty years of age. But with his life he risks ours; and yet, let him say but one word showing a justification, and I will be the first to open my arms to him."

"Well, Marquis," said Gaston, after a few moments' silence, "follow me, and you shall be satisfied."

"And we?" asked Montlouis and Du Couëdic.

"Come also, — you are all gentlemen; I risk no more in confiding my secret to all than to one."

The marquis called Talhouet, who had kept good watch, and who now rejoined the group, and followed without asking what had taken place.

The five men went on but slowly, for Gaston's horse was lame. The chevalier guided them toward the convent, then to the little rivulet, and at ten paces from the iron gate he stopped.

"It is here," said he.

"Here?"

"At the convent?"

"Yes, gentlemen; there is in the convent a young girl whom I have loved since I saw her a year ago in the procession at the Fête Dieu at Nantes. She observed me also; I followed her, and sent her a letter."

"But how do you see her?" asked the marquis.

"A hundred louis won the gardener over to my in-

terest; he has given me a key to this gate. In the summer I come in a boat to the convent wall; ten feet above the water is a window, where she awaits me. If it were lighter, you could see it from this spot; in spite of the darkness, I see it now."

"Yes, I understand how you manage in summer; but you cannot use the boat now."

"True; but, instead, there is a coating of ice on which I shall go this evening. Perhaps it will break and I shall drown myself, — so much the better, for in that case, I hope, your suspicions will be drowned with me."

"You have taken a load from my breast," said Montlouis. "Ah, my poor Gaston, how happy you make me; for, remember, Du Couëdic and I answered for you!"

"Chevalier," said the marquis, "pardon us! embrace me!"

"Willingly, Marquis; but you have destroyed a portion of my happiness."

"How so?"

"I wished my love to be known to no one but myself. I have so much need of strength and courage! Am I not to leave her to-night forever?"

"Who knows, Chevalier? You look gloomily at the future."

"I know what I am saying, Montlouis."

"If you succeed — and with your courage, resolution, and steady nerve you ought to succeed — France will be free. Then she will owe her liberty to you, and you will obtain everything you desire."

"Ah, Marquis, if I succeed, all that will be for you; my own fate is fixed."

"Courage, Chevalier! But in the mean time permit us to see how you manage these love affairs."

"Still distrust, Marquis?"

"Still, my dear Gaston; I even distrust myself. And that is very natural after the honor you have all done me in electing me your chief. Upon me all the responsibility rests, and I must watch over you in spite of you."

"Well, Marquis, look! I am as anxious to reach the foot of that wall as you can be to see me arrive; so I shall not keep you waiting long."

Gaston tied his horse to a tree; by means of a plank thrown across, he passed the stream, opened the gate, and then, following the palisades so as to get away from the stream, he stepped upon the ice, which cracked under his feet.

"In Heaven's name!" cried Montlouis, in suppressed tones, "Gaston, no rashness!"

"God will have mercy. Look, Marquis!" said Gaston.

"Gaston," said Pontcalec, "I believe you, I believe you!"

"Good! You give me fresh courage," replied the chevalier.

"And now, Gaston, one word more. When shall you leave?"

"To-morrow, at this time, Marquis, I shall probably be thirty leagues on the way to Paris."

"Then come back and let us embrace and say adieu."

"With great pleasure."

Gaston retraced his steps, and was embraced cordially by each of the chevaliers, who did not turn away till they saw that he had arrived safely at the end of his perilous journey.

## CHAPTER V.

### SHOWING HOW CHANCE ARRANGES SOME MATTERS BETTER THAN PROVIDENCE.

In spite of the cracking of the ice, Gaston pursued his way boldly, and perceived, with a beating heart, that the winter rains had raised the waters of the little lake, so that he might possibly be able to reach the window.

He was not mistaken. Arrived at the goal of his journey, he clapped his hands together, and imitated the cry of the screech-owl. The window opened, and immediately — sweet recompense for the danger he had incurred — the face of his beloved appeared, at a height not far above him, while a soft, warm hand sought and touched his own. It was the first time. Gaston seized the hand with transport, and covered it with kisses.

"Gaston, you have come, in spite of the cold, and on the ice? I told you in my letter not to do so; the ice is hardly frozen."

"With your letter on my heart, Hélène, I think I am exposed to no danger; but what have you to tell me? You have been crying!"

"Alas, since this morning I have done little else."

"Since this morning?" said Gaston, with a sad smile; "that is strange! If I were not a man, I too should have cried since this morning."

"What do you say, Gaston?"

"Nothing, nothing; tell me, what are your griefs, Hélène?"

"Alas! you know I am not my own mistress. I am a poor orphan, brought up here, having no other world than the convent. I have never seen any one to whom I can give the names of father or mother. My mother I believe to be dead, and they have always told me that my father is abroad. I depend upon an invisible power, known only to our superior. This morning the good mother sent for me, and announced, with tears in her eyes, that I am to leave."

"To leave the convent, Hélène?"

"Yes; my family reclaims me, Gaston."

"Your family? Alas! what new misfortune awaits us?"

"Yes, it is a misfortune, Gaston; though our good mother at first congratulated me, as if it were a pleasure. But I was happy in this convent, and asked the Lord only that I might remain here until I should become your wife. The Lord otherwise arranges my future, — what will it be?"

"And this order to remove you?"

"Admits neither dispute nor delay. Alas! it seems that I belong to a powerful family, — that I am the daughter of a great nobleman. When the good mother told me I must leave, I burst into tears, and fell on my knees, and said I would not leave her. Then, suspecting that I had some hidden motive, she pressed me, questioned me, and — forgive me, Gaston; I wanted to confide in some one; I felt the want of pity and consolation — and I told her all; that we love each other — all except the manner in which we meet. I was afraid, if I told her that, that she would prevent my seeing you this last time to say adieu."

"But did you not tell, Hélène, my purposes concerning you, — that, bound to an association myself for six months, perhaps for a year, at the end of that time, the very day I shall be free, my name, my fortune, my life will be yours?"

"I told her, Gaston, and this is what makes me think I am the daughter of some powerful nobleman; for then Mother Ursula replied: 'You must forget the chevalier, my child, for your new family probably would not consent to your marrying him.'"

"But do not I belong to one of the oldest families in Bretagne? And though I am not rich, my fortune is independent. Did you say this, Hélène?"

"Yes; I said to her, 'Gaston chose me, an orphan without name and without fortune. I may be separated from him, but it would be cruel ingratitude to forget him, and I shall never do so.'"

"Hélène, you are an angel. And you cannot then imagine who are your parents, or to what you are destined?"

"No; it appears to be a profound, inviolable secret, on which all my future happiness depends; only, Gaston, I fear they are high in station, for it almost appeared as if our superior spoke to me with deference."

"To you, Hélène?"

"Yes."

"So much the better," said Gaston, sighing.

"Why do you say, 'So much the better'? Do you rejoice at our separation, Gaston?"

"No, Hélène; but I rejoice that you find your family when perhaps you are about to lose a friend."

"Lose a friend, Gaston! Why, I have no friend but you; am I then to lose you?"

"At least, I must leave you for some time, Hélène."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Fate has undertaken to make our destinies alike throughout, and that you are not the only one who does not know what the morrow may bring forth."

"Gaston! Gaston! what does this strange language mean?"

"That I also am driven by a fatality to which I must yield, — that I also am governed by a superior and irresistible power."

"You? Oh, Heavens!"

"To a power which may condemn me to leave you in a week, in a fortnight, in a month, — not only to leave you, but to leave France."

"Ah, Gaston, what do you tell me?"

"What in my love, or rather in my egotism, I have not dared to tell you before. I shut my eyes to this hour, and yet I knew that it must come; this morning they were opened. I must leave you, Hélène."

"But why? What enterprise have you undertaken? What is to become of you?"

"Alas, Hélène, we each have our secret," said the chevalier, sorrowfully; "I pray that yours may be less terrible than mine."

"Gaston!"

"Were you not the first to say that we must part, Hélène? Had not you first the courage to renounce me? Well; blessings on you for that courage, — for I, Hélène, I had it not."

And at these last words the young man again pressed his lips to her hand, and in spite of his effort to control himself, Hélène could see that tears stood in his eyes.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" she murmured, "how have we deserved this misery?"

At this exclamation Gaston raised his head. "Come," he said as if to himself, "courage! There are necessities against which it is useless to contend. Let us yield, then, Hélène, — let us yield without a struggle, without a murmur. Perhaps we shall disarm Fate by resignation. Shall I be able to see you again before your departure?"

"I fear not; I leave to-morrow."

"And on what road?"

"To Paris."

"What! you are going, then, to —"

"I am going to Paris."

"*Grand Dieu!*" cried Gaston; "so am I!"

"You also, Gaston?"

"I also! I also must set out, Hélène; we were wrong, — we shall not separate."

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* what are you saying, Gaston?"

"Hélène, we had no right to accuse Providence, who in return grants us more than we would have dared to ask. Not only can we see each other on the journey, but we may meet also at Paris. How do you travel?"

"In the convent carriage, with post-horses and by short stages."

"Who goes with you?"

"A nun, who will return to the convent when she has delivered me over to those who await me."

"Nothing, then, could be better, Hélène. I shall go on horseback, as a stranger, unknown to you; every evening I may speak to you, or, if I cannot do so, I shall at least see you, — it will be but a half separation."

And the two lovers, with the buoyant hopes of youth, after meeting with tears and sadness, parted with smiles and joyous confidence in the future. Gaston recrossed the frozen lake, and found, instead of his own wounded horse, a horse left for him by Montlouis; thanks to this kindness, he reached Nantes safely in less than three quarters of an hour.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE JOURNEY.

That very night Gaston made his will, which on the day following he deposited with a notary at Nantes.

He left everything to Hélène de Chaverny, begged her, if he died, not to renounce the world, but to accept the career opening to her youth and beauty; only, as he was the last of his family, he entreated her, in memory of him, to call her first son Gaston.

He next went to take a last farewell of his friends, and expressed to them his confidence in the success of the enterprise. Pontcalec gave him half a gold coin and a letter which he was to present to a certain Captain la Jonquière, their correspondent at Paris, who would put Gaston in communication with the important persons he went to seek. He then put all the ready money he had into a valise, and, accompanied only by a servant named Oven, who had been in his service three years, and in whom he had great confidence, he set out from Nantes.

It was mid-day, a bright sun shone on the stream, and sparkled on the icicles which hung from the leafless trees, as Gaston made his way along the deserted road, looking in vain for anything resembling the convent carriage. The servant appeared much more anxious to quicken their pace than Gaston himself did, for to him the journey was fraught with annoyances, and he was so anxious to arrive at that Paris of which he had heard such wonderful tales,

that, had it been possible, he would willingly have added wings to their horses' feet.

Gaston, however, travelled slowly as far as Oudon; but the convent carriage proceeded more slowly still. At Oudon he halted; he chose the Char Couronné, a house which had some windows overlooking the road, and which, moreover, he had been informed, was the best inn in the village, and the one most frequented by travellers.

While his dinner was preparing, Gaston, in spite of the cold, remained in the balcony; but in vain he looked for the carriage he so much wished to see. Then he thought that perhaps Hélène had preceded him, and was already in the inn. He went at once to a window at the back, overlooking the courtyard, to inspect the carriages standing there. His attention was arrested by seeing, not the carriage, but his servant, Oven, speaking earnestly to a man dressed in gray and wrapped in a sort of military cloak, who, after a short conversation, mounted his horse and rode off with the air of a man to whom speed is of the utmost importance. Gaston, following the sound of the horse's hoofs upon the road, understood that the stranger was directing his course toward Paris.

At this moment the servant raised his eyes, and saw his master looking at him. He turned red, and like a man surprised in a fault, he began busily brushing the snow from his boots and clothes. Gaston signed to him to come under the window, and though that summons was evidently disagreeable to him, he obeyed.

"With whom were you talking, Oven?"

"With a man, Monsieur Gaston," he replied, with that air of stupidity and malice which distinguishes our peasants.

"Who is that man?"

"A traveller — a soldier who was asking his way."

"His way? — to what place?"

"To Rennes."

"But you could not tell him, for you are not acquainted with this region."

"I asked the landlord, Monsieur."

"Why could not he ask the landlord?"

"Because he had had a quarrel with him about the price of his dinner, and did not wish to speak to him again."

"Hum!" said Gaston.

Nothing was more natural than this, yet Gaston became thoughtful; but he quickly threw off his suspicions, accusing himself of becoming timid at a time when he most needed courage. His brow remained clouded, however, for the carriage did not appear.

He thought at one moment that Hélène might have chosen another road in order to part from him without noise or quarrel; but he soon concluded that it was only some accident which delayed her. He sat down again to table, though he had finished his dinner, and when Oven, coming in to remove the dishes, looked at him with astonishment, he said, —

"Some wine," feeling in his turn the necessity for keeping up appearances which Oven himself had felt a quarter of an hour earlier.

Oven had already taken away a half-empty bottle, included in his perquisites, and staring at his master, ordinarily so temperate, with an air of stupefaction, "Some wine?" he repeated.

"Yes, some wine; is there anything surprising in that?"

"No, Monsieur," replied Oven, and he transmitted the order for a second bottle of wine to the waiter. Gaston poured out some wine and drank it, and then

filled a second glass. Oven stared; then, thinking it his duty, and his interest also — since that second bottle, like the first, would belong to him — to arrest his master on his downward course, "Monsieur," said he, "I have heard that if you are riding it is bad to drink when it is very cold. You forget that we have a long way to go, and that it will be getting still colder, and if we wait much longer, we shall get no post-horses. It is nearly three o'clock now, and at half-past four it will be dark."

This behavior surprised Gaston. "You are in a very great hurry, Oven," said he; "have you a rendezvous with the man who was asking his way of you?"

"Monsieur knows that to be impossible," replied Oven, "since he is going to Rennes, and we are on the way to Paris."

However, under the scrutinizing gaze of his master, Oven lost countenance; Gaston was about to ask him another question, when the noise of a carriage was heard, coming from the direction of Nantes. Gaston hastened to the window; it was the green and black carriage. On seeing it, Gaston forgot everything else, and leaving Oven to recover himself at his leisure, darted from the room.

It was then Oven's turn to run to the window, to see what it was that had so much interested his master. He saw a green and black carriage stop, and the driver alight and open the door; then he saw a young lady in a cloak go into the hotel, followed by an Augustine sister; the two ladies, announcing that they intended to depart after dinner, asked for a private room.

But to reach this private room they had to cross the public hall, in which Gaston stood near the fireplace; a rapid but meaning glance was exchanged between him and Hélène, and, to Gaston's great satisfaction, he recognized in the driver of the carriage the convent-gardener

He let him pass, however, unnoticed ; but as the gardener crossed the yard to go to the stable, he followed him, and spoke to him. The gardener told him that he was to take the two ladies to Rambouillet, where Hélène would remain; and then he was to take back Sister Thérèse to Clisson.

Gaston, raising his eyes suddenly, saw Oven watching him; this curiosity displeased him. "What are you doing there?" he asked.

"Waiting for orders," said Oven.

"Do you know that fellow?" asked Gaston, of the gardener.

"Monsieur Oven, your servant? To be sure I do; we are from the same place."

"So much the worse," murmured Gaston.

"Oh, Oven is an honest fellow."

"It is of no consequence," said Gaston; "not a word of Hélène, I beg."

The gardener promised; and, indeed, it was his own interest to keep the secret, for had it been discovered that he had given Gaston the key, he would have lost his place.

Gaston then returned to the common hall, where he found Oven waiting for him. It was necessary to get him away from there; he ordered him to saddle the horses. Meanwhile the gardener had hurried the postilions, and the carriage was ready to start.

The two ladies, after a short and frugal repast, — for it was a fast-day, — crossed again the public hall. At the door they found Gaston, standing with uncovered head, ready to offer his hand to assist them in getting into the carriage. Such attentions were not uncommon at that epoch, and besides, Chanlay was not quite unknown to the Augustine sister. She therefore accepted his services

with a gracious smile. It need not be said that after offering his hand to Sister Thérèse, Gaston had a right to offer it to Hélène.

"Monsieur," said Oven, behind the chevalier, "our horses are ready."

"Very well," said Gaston; "I will take a glass of wine, and will then set out."

Gaston made a parting bow to the two ladies as the carriage started off, and then returned to his chamber. To his lackey's great astonishment, he ordered a third bottle of wine, for the second had disappeared like the first; but from the three bottles Gaston drank only a glass and a half.

He remained about a quarter of an hour, and then, having no further motive for waiting, he took his departure.

When they had ridden a short distance, they saw the carriage imbedded in a deep rut, where, in spite of the efforts of the gardener and the postilion, it remained stationary. Gaston could not leave the two women in such a dilemma; and the gardener, recognizing Oven, called to him for aid. The two riders dismounted, opened the carriage door, took out the ladies, and succeeded in freeing the carriage, so that they were able to proceed.

An acquaintanceship thus inaugurated placed the cavalier in an excellent position. Night was approaching, and Sister Thérèse timidly asked him if the road was safe. The poor sister thought all the main roads were infested with thieves. Gaston was careful not to reassure her wholly; he said that since he was journeying in the same direction, he and his servant would escort them. This proposition seemed to her highly considerate, and was accepted without hesitation.

Meanwhile Hélène had played her part admirably, showing that a young girl, however simple and naïve, has the instinct of dissimulation, which only requires opportunity to develop itself.

Gaston rode along close to the door, for the road was narrow, and Sister Thérèse asked him many questions. She learned that he was called the Chevalier de Livry, and was the brother of one of the young ladies who had been in the convent school, but who was now married to Montlouis.

They stopped, as previously arranged, at Ancenis. Gaston, still with the same politeness and the same restraint, assisted the ladies to alight. The gardener confirmed what Gaston had said of his relationship to Mademoiselle de Livry, so that Sister Thérèse had no suspicion, and was very friendly with him.

On the following morning, as the two women were about to set out, Sister Thérèse was much pleased to see the chevalier and his lackey already mounted, and waiting in the courtyard. Gaston immediately dismounted, and with his usual politeness assisted them into the carriage. As he did so, he slipped a note into Hélène's hand, and by a glance she told him he should receive a reply.

Gaston rode by the side of the carriage, for the road was bad, and assistance was frequently required to lift a wheel from the rut, to assist the ladies to alight for the purpose of walking up a steep ascent, or for some other service; so that the poor Thérèse was at a loss to express to Gaston her gratitude.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she said to Hélène, "what would have become of us if God had not sent to our aid this kind and excellent gentleman?"

Before arriving at Angers, Gaston inquired at what

hotel they were going to stay; and finding that it was the one at which he intended to put up, he sent Oven on before to engage apartments.

When they arrived, he received a note which Hélène had written during dinner. Alas, the poor child had already forgotten the conversation at the convent window; she spoke of their love as if it were to continue without interruption, and of their happiness as if it were not limited to the duration of their journey to Paris.

As to Gaston, he read the letter with profound sadness. For him there was no illusion; he looked at the future with despair. Bound by his oath to a conspiracy, sent to Paris to fulfil a terrible mission, he accepted the joy which had come to him only as a respite in the midst of sorrow; but beyond the joy the sorrow still remained, fearful and threatening. He remembered that he was about to lose happiness, just as he had tasted it for the first time, and rebelled against his fate. He did not consider that he had himself sought that conspiracy which now bound him, and which forced him to pursue a path leading to exile or the scaffold, though now he had in sight another path which would lead him direct to happiness.

It is true that when Gaston joined the conspiracy he did not know Hélène, and thought himself alone in the world. The poor fellow, when he was twenty-two years old, believed that the world had finally refused to him its joys, and pitilessly denied to him its pleasures. One day he met Hélène, and at once the world appeared to him as it really is, — that is, full of promises for those who can wait, full of recompences for those who deserve them. But it was too late; he had already entered on a career from which he could not draw back.

Meanwhile, in the preoccupation of his mind, Gaston had quite forgotten his suspicions of Oven, and had not

noticed that he had spoken to two cavaliers similar to the one whom he had seen the first evening, and who, like that other, took the road to Paris. But Oven, who was not in love, lost nothing of what passed between Gaston and Hélène.

As they approached the end of their journey, Gaston became sad; and when the landlord at Chartres replied to the question of Sister Thérèse, "To-morrow, you may, if you choose, reach Rambouillet," it was as though he had said, "To-morrow, you separate forever."

Hélène, who loved as women love, with the strength, or rather the weakness, to sacrifice everything to that love, could not understand Gaston's passive submission to the decrees of Providence; and she would have preferred to see him make some effort to combat them.

But Hélène was in this unjust to Gaston; the same ideas tormented him. He knew that at a word from him Hélène would follow him to the end of the world. He had plenty of gold; it would be easy for Hélène some evening, instead of going to rest, to go with him into a post-chaise, and in two days they would be beyond the frontier, free and happy, not for a day or a month, but forever.

Yes; but there was a certain word which forbade all that, — a simple collection of letters, having significance to some men, and none at all to others. That word was "honor." Gaston had pledged his word to four men of honor like himself, — Pontcalec, Montlouis, Couëdic, and Talhouet; if he broke his word he would be dishonored. He was fully decided to submit to his misfortunes and to keep his word.

Hélène was confident that Gaston would do something or propose something during that evening, the last of their journey; but to her great astonishment he did nothing,

he proposed nothing. She went to her bed with a wounded heart, and tears in her eyes, convinced that she was not loved as much as she loved. She deceived herself; for that night Gaston did not even lie down, and the returning day showed him paler and more despairing than ever.

From Chartres they set out for Rambouillet. At Chartres, Oven had an interview with another of those cavaliers in gray, who seemed to be sentinels posted on the route; and now that he was drawing nearer to Paris, — the place he so longed to see, — he hastened with added zeal the progress of his charge. They breakfasted in a village. They were all silent over their repast. The nun was thinking that before night she would be on her way back to her dear convent. Hélène was thinking that if now at last Gaston should decide upon some vigorous course of action, it was too late. Gaston was thinking that he was about to abandon the sweet society of that beloved woman for the terrible companionship of unknown, mysterious men, to whom his fatal mission would unite him in permanent relations.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon they came to an ascent so steep that they were obliged to alight. Gaston offered his arm to Hélène, the nun took that of the gardener, and they climbed the hill. The two lovers walked side by side in silence, their hearts overflowing. They reached the summit well in advance of their companions; and there, looking toward the horizon, they saw in the distance a steeple around which were grouped a number of houses, like sheep around a shepherd. It was Rambouillet. There was no one to tell them the name of the place; at the same instant and by the same shock they divined it.

Gaston was the first to break the silence. "There,"

said he, "our paths separate, perhaps forever. Hélène, I implore you, preserve the recollection of me, and whatever event may happen, do not let your curse rest upon it."

"Gaston, you speak to me only of terrible things. I need courage; and instead of giving it to me, you take it from me. Have you, then, nothing to tell me which will give me at least a little hope? I know the present is dark, but is the future also as dreadful? Are there not many years, and therefore many hopes, to look forward to? We are young, we love each other; are there no means of struggling against the fate which threatens us? Oh, Gaston! I feel in myself a great strength, and if you only say — but no, I am mad; it is I who suffer, and it is I who console."

"I understand you, Hélène; you want a promise, do you not? Well, judge if I am wretched; I dare not promise. You tell me to hope, and I can but despair. If I had ten years, five years, one year, at my own disposal, I would offer them to you, Hélène, and think myself blessed; but from the moment I leave you, we lose each other. From to-morrow morning I belong no more to myself."

"Oh!" cried Hélène, "unhappy that I am, did you then deceive me when you said you loved me; are you pledged to another?"

"At least, my poor Hélène," said Gaston, "on this point I can reassure you. I have no other love but you."

"Then we may yet be happy, Gaston, if my new family will recognize you as my husband."

"Hélène, do you not see that every word you utter stabs me to the heart."

least tell me what it is."

hich I cannot escape, — ties which I dare not

"I know of none such," cried the young girl. "I am promised a family, riches, station, and a name; and yet, Gaston, say but one word and I leave them all for you. Why, then, will you not do as much?"

Gaston lowered his head and made no reply. At that moment Sister Thérèse rejoined them; in the growing darkness she failed to remark the agitation of the two lovers. The women returned to the carriage, the gardener climbed to his seat, Gaston and Oven remounted their horses, and they proceeded on their way to Rambouillet.

When they neared the town, the nun called Gaston, and said to him that perhaps some one would come to meet Hélène, and that a stranger should not be seen with them. Gaston had thought of this, but had not the courage to speak of it.

Hélène meanwhile waited and hoped, — for what? She herself did not know. Did she hope that Gaston would be urged by stress of grief to final action? But Gaston only bowed profoundly, thanked the ladies for having permitted him to journey with them, and so made ready to depart.

Hélène was no ordinary woman. She saw, in Gaston's manner and appearance, that he was going away with death in his heart. "Is it *adieu*, or is it *au revoir?*" she asked courageously.

"*Au revoir!*" he replied, "if you will do me that honor." And he rode off at a rapid pace.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A ROOM IN THE HOTEL AT RAMBOUILLET.

GASTON went away without saying a word as to how or where they were to meet again; but Hélène reflected that it was for him to provide for that. She followed him with her eyes until he disappeared in the darkness.

The nun drew a paper from her pocket, and by the light of a lantern read the following address: "Madame Desroches, Tigre Royal Hotel." She gave directions to the postilion, and ten minutes later the carriage stopped at the place designated. A woman who was waiting came out hastily, and respectfully assisted the ladies to alight, and then guided them through the passages of the hotel, preceded by a valet carrying lights.

A door opened, Madame Desroches drew back to allow Hélène and Sister Thérèse to pass, and they soon found themselves seated on a soft and easy sofa, in front of a bright fire.

The room was large and well, but soberly, furnished, for the capricious style which we call Rococo was not yet introduced. There were four doors: the first was that by which they had entered; the second led to the dining-room, which was already lighted and warmed; the third led into a richly-appointed bedroom; the fourth was closed.

Hélène admired, without astonishment, all this magnificence, and also the silence of the servants, — their quiet and respectful demeanor, so different from the

animated faces of the eager inn-keepers they had seen on their journey, — while Sister Thérèse rejoiced, when she saw the smoking supper, that it was not a fast-day.

Presently Madame Desroches, who, after ushering the two travellers into the salon, had left them alone, returned, and approaching the sister, handed her a letter. She opened it and read as follows : —

"Sister Thérèse may pass the night at Rambouillet, or leave again at once, according to her own wish. She will receive two hundred louis offered to the convent by Hélène, and will give up her charge to the care of Madame Desroches, who is honored by the confidence of Hélène's relatives."

At the bottom of the letter, instead of a signature, was a cipher, which the sister compared with that on a letter which she had brought from Clisson. The identity being proved, "My child," said she, "I leave you after supper."

"So soon!" said Hélène, to whom Thérèse was now the only link to her past life.

"Yes, my child. It is at my option to sleep here, but I prefer to return at once; for I wish to be again at home, where the only thing wanting to my happiness will be your presence."

Hélène threw herself on Thérèse's neck, weeping. She recalled the days of her youth, spent so happily among companions who were all devoted to her, — either by reason of the superior's recommendations, or because she herself had the secret of making herself beloved. By one of those miracles of thought which science will never explain, the venerable trees, the beautiful lake, the Augustine steeples returned to her remembrance; and all that experience, which already had become to her like a dream, passed vividly before her eyes.

The good Sister Thérèse wept warm tears, and her agitation was such that she forgot the demands of appetite. She was on the point of departing without having eaten anything, when Madame Desroches announced to them that supper was ready, and reminded Thérèse that in her night journey she would find no open inn.

They sat down to table, and Sister Thérèse hastily partook of some refreshment, and then embraced Hélène, who wished to accompany her to the carriage; but Madame Desroches begged her not to do so, as the hotel was full of strangers, and it would not be proper for her to be seen.

Hélène then asked permission to see the gardener, who had been their escort, once more. The poor man had solicited the favor of bidding her farewell, but without arousing much interest in his sentimental desires. As soon, however, as Madame Desroches heard Hélène express a wish so much in accord with his, she gave him an opportunity to see her once more from whom he thought he had parted forever. At this crisis in her life Hélène felt herself drawn to the elderly sister and the poor gardener, as to friends from whom it was painful to part. She called them back, recommending, in a few last words, to the one her friends, to the other her flowers; and in the midst of all she bestowed on the gardener glances of gratitude which had reference to the key of the convent-gate.

Madame Desroches, seeing that Hélène felt vainly in her pocket, said, "Does Mademoiselle want anything?"

"Yes," said Hélène; "I wish to give a souvenir to ... 's good man."

adame Desroches gave Hélène twenty-five louis, and without counting them, slipped them into the gar-

dener's hand, who overwhelmed her with tears and thanks.

At length they were forced to part, and Hélène, hearing the sound of their carriage driving away, threw herself on a sofa, weeping.

Madame Desroches then went to her, and reminded her that although she had sat at table, she had in fact eaten nothing. Hélène consented to take supper, although she had no appetite. She hoped to have some word from Gaston during the evening, and was seeking to gain time. She therefore took her place at the table, and invited Madame Desroches to join her; but the latter consented to do so only after Hélène's repeated entreaties, and however the young girl insisted, she refused to eat, and limited herself to serving.

After supper Madame Desroches conducted Hélène to her bedroom, and said to her, "Now, Mademoiselle, you will ring when you wish the services of the maid who awaits your orders; you must know that this evening you will probably receive a visit."

"A visit!" cried Hélène.

"Yes, Mademoiselle; from one of your relatives."

"And is it the one who watches over me?"

"From your birth, Mademoiselle."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" cried Hélène; "and he is coming?"

"I think so, for he is most anxious to know you."

"Oh," murmured Hélène, "I feel as if I should faint."

Madame Desroches ran to her, and supported her.

"Do you feel so much terror," asked she, "at the thought of seeing one who loves you?"

"It is not terror, it is agitation," said Hélène. "I did not know that it would be to-night; and this news, so important, and so suddenly imparted, quite overcomes me."

"But I have not told you all; this person is necessarily surrounded by mystery."

"Why so?"

"I am forbidden to make any reply to that question, Mademoiselle."

"What necessity can there be for such precautions with a poor orphan like me?"

"They are necessary, believe me."

"But in what do they consist?"

"Firstly, you may not see the face of this person; so that if perchance you meet him afterward you may not recognize him."

"Then he will come masked?"

"No, Mademoiselle; but all the lights will be extinguished."

"Then we shall be in darkness?"

"Yes."

"But you will remain with me, Madame Desroches."

"No, Mademoiselle; that is expressly forbidden."

"By whom?"

"By the person who is coming to see you."

"But do you, then, owe such absolute obedience to this person?"

"More than that, Mademoiselle, I owe him the deepest respect."

"Is he, then, of such high station?"

"He is of the very highest in France."

"And this great nobleman is my relative?"

"The nearest."

"For Heaven's sake, Madame Desroches, do not leave me in uncertainty on this point."

"I have already had the honor to tell you, Mademoi-
, that there are some questions to which I am ex-

pressly forbidden to reply." And Madame Desroches moved toward the door as if to withdraw.

"You leave me?" cried Hélène.

"I leave you to your toilet."

"But, Madame —"

Madame Desroches made a profound reverence, and went out of the room, closing the door behind her.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A HUNTSMAN IN THE LIVERY OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC D'ORLÉANS.

WHILE the things which we have related were taking place in the parlor of the Hotel Tigre Royal, in another apartment of the same hotel, seated near a large fire, was a man shaking the snow from his boots, and untying the strings of a large portfolio. He was dressed as a huntsman, in the livery of the house of Orléans, — the coat red and silver, large boots, and a three-cornered hat trimmed with silver. He had a quick eye, a long, pointed nose, a round and open forehead, which was contradicted by thin and compressed lips.

This man, according to a habit which belonged to him, was speaking to himself, or rather was muttering between his teeth, sentences which he interrupted by exclamations and oaths, which seemed to refer not so much to the words he uttered as to thoughts that suddenly crossed his mind.

"Come, come," said he, "Monsieur de Montaran did not deceive me, and our Bretons are hard at the work; but for what earthly reason can he have come by such short stages? He left at noon on the 11th, and arrived only on the evening of the 21st. This probably hides some new mystery which will be explained by the fellow recommended by Montaran, and with whom my people were in communication on the journey. Holloa, some one!"

d he rang a silver bell.

A man dressed in gray, like those we have seen on the route, appeared.

"Ah, it is you, Tapin?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; the affair being important, I thought it better to come myself."

"Have you questioned the men you placed on the road?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; but they know nothing except the places at which our conspirator stopped; in fact, that is all they were told to learn."

"That is true. I will try to learn more about him from the servant. What sort of man is he?"

"Oh, a mischievous simpleton, half Norman, half Breton; a bad fellow."

"What is he doing at this moment?"

"Serving his master's supper."

"Whom, I hope, they have placed as I desired, — in a room on the ground-floor."

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"In a room without curtains?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"And you have made a hole in the shutter?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Well, then, send me the servant, and remain within call."

The man in the red coat consulted his watch. "Half-past eight," said he; "at this hour Monseigneur the Regent returns to St. Germain and asks for Dubois; when he learns that Dubois is not there, he rubs his hands and prepares for some folly. Rub your hands, Monseigneur, and amuse yourself at your pleasure; for the danger is not at Paris, but here. We shall see if you will laugh at my secret police this time. Ah, here is our man."

At this moment Tapin introduced Oven. "Here is the person you wished to see," said he.

Oven remained standing, trembling, near the door; while Dubois, wrapped in a large cloak, which left only the upper part of his face visible, fixed on him his tigerish eyes.

"Approach, my friend," said Dubois.

In spite of the cordiality of this invitation, it was given in so harsh a voice that Oven at that moment would have preferred being a hundred leagues from this man who looked at him so strangely.

"Well, fellow," said Dubois, seeing that he did not stir, "did you not hear me?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," said Oven.

"Then why do you not obey?"

"I could not believe that it was to me you did the honor of saying 'approach.'" As he spoke these words Oven went forward toward the unknown.

"You have received fifty louis to speak the truth to me," continued Dubois.

"Pardon, Monseigneur," said Oven, who began to recover his composure; "I have not received them; they were promised to me, but —"

Dubois took a handful of gold from his pocket, counted fifty louis and placed them in a pile on the table. Oven looked at the pile with an expression of which one would have supposed his dull countenance incapable.

"Good," thought Dubois; "he is avaricious."

In fact, the fifty louis had seemed to Oven, until then, imaginary and unreal. He had betrayed his master with scarcely a hope of obtaining his reward; and now the promised gold was there before his eyes.

"May I take them," asked Oven, reaching his hand toward the pile.

"Wait a moment," said Dubois, who amused himself by exciting that cupidity which any but a peasant would have concealed; "we will make a bargain."

"What is it?" asked Oven.

"Here are the fifty louis."

"I see them," said Oven, passing his tongue over his lips like a thirsty dog.

"At every answer you make to a question of mine, I either add ten louis if it is important, or take ten away if it is unimportant and stupid."

Oven opened his eyes; evidently the bargain seemed to him one-sided.

"Now," said Dubois, "let us talk. From what place have you come?"

"Direct from Nantes."

"With whom?"

"With the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

These being preliminary questions, the pile remained undisturbed.

"Listen!" said Dubois, extending his bony hand toward the pile of gold.

"I am all attention."

"Did your master travel under his own name?"

"He set out under his own name, but took another on the journey."

"What name did he take?"

"The name of Monsieur de Livry."

Dubois added ten louis; but as they would not stand on the pile, already too high, he began another. Oven uttered a joyful cry.

"Oh," said Dubois, "do not exult yet. We are not near the end. Is there a Monsieur de Livry at Nantes?"

"No, Monseigneur; but there is a Demoiselle de Livry."

"Who is she?"

"The wife of Monsieur de Montlouis, an intimate friend of my master."

"Good," said Dubois, adding ten louis; "and what was your master doing at Nantes?"

"What most young men do; he hunted, danced, and so on."

Dubois took away ten louis. Oven shuddered. "Stop," said he; "there was something else that occupied him."

"Ah! what was that?"

"I don't know what it was," replied Oven.

Dubois held the ten louis in his hand.

"And since his departure, what has he done?"

"He passed through Oudon, Ancenis, Le Mans, Nogent, and Chartres."

Dubois stretched out his hand, and took up another ten louis. Oven uttered a dolorous cry.

"And did he make no acquaintance on the route?"

"Yes; with a young lady from the Augustine convent at Clisson, who was travelling with a sister of the convent, named Thérèse."

"And what was the young lady's name?"

"Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny."

"Hélène! — a promising name. Doubtless she is your master's mistress?"

"Of course I know nothing about that. You know he would not be likely to speak of it to me."

"He is a shrewd fellow," said Dubois, taking ten louis from the fifty.

Oven trembled; four such answers, and he would have betrayed his master for nothing.

"And these ladies are going to Paris with him?"

"No, Monseigneur; they stop at Rambouillet."

"Ah!" said Dubois.

The tone of this exclamation gave Oven some hope.

"Come," said Dubois, "all this is not very important,

but one must encourage beginners." And he added ten louis to the pile.

"Sister Thérèse," continued Oven, "has already started on her return."

"So that the young lady is left alone?"

"No," answered Oven.

"How is that?"

"A lady from Paris awaited her."

"A lady from Paris?"

"Yes."

"Do you know her name?"

"I heard Sister Thérèse call her Madame Desroches."

"Madame Desroches!" cried Dubois, and he began another pile with ten louis. "You say Madame Desroches?"

"Yes," replied Oven, delighted.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am; she is a tall, thin, yellow-looking woman."

Dubois added ten louis. Oven regretted then that he had not placed intervals between his adjectives; it was evident that he had lost twenty louis by his precipitation.

"Thin, tall, yellow," repeated Dubois; "just so."

"From forty to forty-five years old," said Oven, expectantly.

"Exactly," said Dubois, adding ten louis.

"Clad in a silk dress, with large flowers on it," continued Oven, wishing to gain all he could.

"Very good," said Dubois.

Oven saw that his questioner knew enough about the lady; he therefore waited in silence.

"And you say that your master made acquaintance with the young lady on the journey?"

"Yes, Monsieur; but I think it was a farce."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that they knew each other before; and I am sure of one thing, that my master waited for her three hours at Oudon."

"Bravo!" said Dubois, adding ten louis; "we shall make something of you."

"You wish to know nothing more, then?" asked Oven, extending his hand toward the two piles of gold.

"One moment," said Dubois; "is the young lady pretty?"

"Beautiful as an angel," answered Oven.

"And, no doubt, they made an appointment to meet in Paris?"

"No, Monsieur; I think they said adieu forever."

"Another farce?"

"I do not think so, Monsieur; my master was so sad when they separated."

"And they are not to meet again?"

"Yes, once more, I think, and all will be over."

"Well, take your money; and remember that if you mention one word of this, in ten minutes you will be a dead man."

Oven snatched the money, which disappeared in his pocket instantly. "And now," said he, "I may go away, may I not?"

"Go away, idiot! by no means; from this moment you belong to me, for I have bought you, and in Paris you will be especially useful to me."

"In that case I will remain, Monsieur, I promise you," said Oven, with a deep sigh.

"There is no need to promise."

At this moment the door opened, and Tapin appeared, looking very much agitated.

"What has happened now?" asked Dubois.

"Something very important, Monseigneur; but send away this man."

"Return to your master," said Dubois, "and if he writes to any one, remember that I am most anxious to see his writing."

Oven went out, delighted to be set free.

"Well, Tapin," said Dubois, "what is it?"

"Monseigneur, after the hunt at St. Germain, his Royal Highness, instead of returning to Paris, sent away every one, and gave orders to proceed to Rambouillet."

"To Rambouillet! Monseigneur the Regent is coming to Rambouillet?"

"He will be here in half an hour, and would have been here now if hunger had not luckily obliged him to enter the château and procure some refreshment."

"And what does he propose to do at Rambouillet?"

"I don't know, Monseigneur, unless his coming has to do with the young girl who has just arrived with a nun, and who is now in the pavilion of the hotel."

"You are right, Tapin; he is coming on her account — Madame Desroches — yes, it is precisely that. Did you know that Madame Desroches was here?"

"No, Monseigneur, I did not."

"And are you sure that your information is correct, my dear Tapin?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, it was from L'Éveillé, whom I placed near his Royal Highness, and what he says is gospel truth."

"You are right," said Dubois, who seemed to know the qualities of this man; "if it be L'Éveillé, there is no doubt."

"The poor fellow has lamed his horse, which fell near Rambouillet."

"Thirty louis for the horse; he may gain what more he can."

Tapin took the thirty louis.

"You know the situation of the pavilion, do you not?" continued Dubois.

"Perfectly."

"Where is it?"

"One side looks on the second courtyard; the other on a deserted lane."

"Place men in the courtyard and in the lane, disguised as stablemen, or as you please; let no one enter the pavilion but Monseigneur and myself; the life of his Royal Highness is at stake."

"Have no fear, Monseigneur."

"Do you know our Breton?"

"I saw him dismount."

"Do your men know him?"

"They all saw him on the road."

"Well, I recommend him to you."

"Shall we arrest him?"

"Certainly not; he must be allowed to go where he pleases, and act as he pleases, and he must have every opportunity to do so. If he were arrested now, he would tell nothing, and our conspiracy would come to an end. No, no; it must hatch."

"Hatch what, Monseigneur?" said Tapin, who appeared to be on confidential terms with Dubois.

"My archbishop's-mitre, Monsieur Lecocq," said Dubois. "And now to your work; I go to mine."

Both left the room and descended the staircase, but separated at the door; Leccoq went along the Rue de Paris, and Dubois, slipping along by the wall, went to peep through the hole in the shutter.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE UTILITY OF A SEAL.

Gaston had just supped; for at his age, whether a man be in despair or in love, Nature asserts her rights. He was leaning on the table thoughtfully. The lamp threw a light over his face, and enabled Dubois to gratify his curiosity.

Dubois looked at the young man with a degree of scrutiny which gave his face a remarkable and frightful expression. His eye dilated, his ironical lips were curled in a fatal smile. Whoever could have seen that smile and that expression would have thought he was looking at the demon who in the infernal regions sees a doomed victim marching to his goal of perdition. While thus looking at him Dubois muttered, according to his habit: "Young, handsome, black eyes, proud lips, — he is a Breton; he is not corrupted, like my conspirators of Cellamare, by the soft glances of the ladies at court. But how he goes on, the fiend! The others spoke only of carrying off, dethroning, but this one — *diable!* And yet," continued he, after a pause, "I look in vain for traces of cunning on that open brow; I see no Machiavelism in the corners of that mouth, so full of loyalty and honor. There is, however, no room for doubt that all is arranged to surprise the regent on his visit to this Clisson demoiselle. Who will say again that Bretons have dull brains?"

"No," said Dubois, after another moment of examination; "it cannot be so, and I do not yet understand. It

is impossible that this young man, with his calm sad face, should be intending in a quarter of an hour to kill a man, — and what man? The regent of France, the first prince of the blood! No, it is impossible; I cannot believe in such sang-froid. And yet the regent has kept this amourous secret even from me, — from me, to whom he tells everything. He goes out to hunt at St. Germain, announces aloud that he shall sleep at the Palais Royal, then all at once gives counter-orders, and drives to Rambouillet. At Rambouillet the young girl waits, received there by Madame Desroches! For whom can she be waiting if not for the regent? And this young girl is the mistress of the chevalier. But is she his mistress? Ah, we must learn. Here comes our friend Oven, who, after putting his eighty louis in a place of safety, is carrying paper and ink to his master. The young man is going to write. Very good; now we shall learn something definite. Meanwhile let us see how far we can depend on that scoundrel of a valet."

Dubois left his place of observation, shivering; for, it may be remembered, the weather was cold. He paused on the staircase and waited; himself quite hidden in the shade, he could see Gaston's door in the light.

The door presently opened, and Oven appeared. He held a letter in his hands, and after hesitating a minute, he appeared to have taken his determination, and mounted the staircase.

"Good," said Dubois, "he has tasted the forbidden fruit, and he is mine." Then, stopping Oven, "Give me the letter which you were bringing me," he said, "and wait here."

"How did you know I had a letter?" asked Oven, bewildered.

Dubois shrugged his shoulders, took the letter, and dis-

appeared. In his room he examined the seal; the chevalier, who had neither wax nor seal, had used the wax on a bottle, and had sealed the letter with the stone of a ring. Dubois held the letter above the candle, and the wax melted. He opened the letter and read: —

DEAR HÉLÈNE, — Your courage has doubled mine; manage so that I can enter the house, and you shall know my plans.

"Oh!" said Dubois, "it seems she does not know them yet. Things are not as far advanced as I supposed."

He resealed the letter with one of the numerous rings which he wore, the bezel of which resembled that of the chevalier's, and calling Oven, "Here," said he, "is your master's letter; deliver it faithfully, bring me the answer, and you shall have ten louis."

"Ah!" thought Oven, "has this man a mine of gold?" And he went away hastily. Ten minutes after he returned with the reply. It was on scented and ornamented paper, and was sealed with the letter H.

Dubois opened a box, and took out a kind of paste in which he prepared to take an impression of the seal; but he observed that owing to the manner in which the letter was folded, he could read it without opening. It was as follows: —

"The person who sent for me at Bretagne is coming to meet me here instead of waiting at Paris, so impatient is he, I am told, to see me. I think he will leave again to-night. Come to-morrow morning before nine. I will tell you all that has occurred, and then we can arrange how to act."

"This," said Dubois, still taking Hélène for the chevalier's accomplice, "makes it clearer. *Peste*, what a forward girl she is! If this is the way they bring up young

ladies at Clisson, I must congratulate the superior on her success. And Monseigneur, counting on her sixteen years, takes her for an innocent! Oh, he will regret not having recourse to me; I find better than that when I search. Here," said he to Oven, "here is the letter, and here are your ten louis."

Oven pocketed the ten louis, and carried away the letter. The worthy fellow could make nothing of his good-luck; he wondered what fortune could be awaiting him in Paris, if such manna fell so freely in the suburbs. At this moment ten o'clock struck, and the rolling of a carriage was heard. Dubois went to the window, and saw the carriage stop at the hotel door. In it was a gentleman whom Dubois at once recognized as Lafare, captain of his Royal Highness's guards. "Well," said he, "he is more prudent than I thought; but where is he? Ah!"

This exclamation was drawn from him by the sight of a man dressed in the same red livery which he himself concealed under his cloak, and who followed the carriage mounted on a superb Spanish jenet, which, however, he could not have ridden long, for while the carriage horses were covered with foam, this one was quite fresh.

Lafare at once demanded a room and supper; meanwhile the horseman dismounted, threw the reins to a page, and went toward the pavilion.

"Well," said Dubois, "all this is as clear as water from a rock. But how is it that the face of the chevalier does not appear? Is he too much occupied with his love-letter to have heard the carriage? I must find out. As to you, Monseigneur," continued Dubois, "be assured; I will not disturb your tête-à-tête. Enjoy at your pleasure this study of artlessness which promises such happy results. Ah, Monseigneur, it is certain that you are short-sighted!"

While muttering this monologue Dubois had gone

downstairs to his post of observation. As he looked through the hole in the shutter, Gaston rose, after putting the letter in his pocket-book, which, with great care, he replaced in his pocket.

"Ah," said Dubois, "I must have that pocket-book; I would pay high for it. He is going out, he buckles on his sword, he looks for his cloak; where is he going? Let us see — to wait for his Royal Highness's exit? No, no; that is not the face of a man who has reached the moment when he is about to do murder. I am rather tempted to believe that for this evening he will content himself with playing the Spaniard beneath the windows of his beloved. Ah, faith, if he has that excellent idea it will perhaps afford a means — "

It would be difficult to describe the significance of the smile which passed over Dubois's face at this moment.

"Yes; but if I were to get a sword thrust in the enterprise, how Monseigneur would laugh. Bah, there is no danger; our men are at their post, and besides, nothing venture, nothing gain."

Encouraged by this reflection, Dubois made the circuit of the hotel, in order to appear at one end of the little lane as Gaston appeared at the other. As he had expected, at the end of the lane he found Tapin, who had placed L'Éveillé in the courtyard; in two words he explained his project. Tapin pointed out to Dubois one of his men lying on the steps of an outer door, a third was playing a kind of jews-harp in the guise of an itinerant musician, and there was a fourth too well hidden to be seen.

Dubois, thus sure of support, advanced into the lane. He soon perceived a form approaching from the contrary direction, and that form had the appearance of the person whom he was seeking. In fact, as they passed each other Dubois recognized the chevalier; as to the latter, preoccu-

pied with his thoughts, he did not seek to know whom he passed, and perhaps, even, was not aware that he had passed any one. This did not suit Dubois. He wanted a good, round quarrel, and he saw that he must take the initiative. He turned and stopped before the chevalier, who had also paused, and was trying to discover which were the windows of Hélène's chamber.

"My friend," said Dubois, roughly, "what are you doing at this hour before this house?"

Gaston lowered his eyes from heaven to earth, and fell back from the poesy of his thoughts to the hard facts of life. "I beg pardon, Monsieur," he said; "I think you spoke to me."

"Yes," replied Dubois; "I asked what you are doing here."

"Pass on," said the chevalier; "I do not interfere with you; do not interfere with me."

"That might be," said Dubois, "if your presence did not annoy me."

"This lane, narrow as it is, is wide enough for both, Monsieur; walk on one side, and I will walk on the other."

"I wish to walk alone," said Dubois, "therefore, I beg you will choose some other window; there are plenty at Rambouillet to choose from."

"And why should I not look at these windows if I wish?" asked Chanlay.

"Because they are those of my wife," replied Dubois.

"Of your wife?"

"Yes; of my wife, who has just arrived from Paris, and of whom I am jealous, I warn you."

"*Diable!*" murmured Gaston; "he must be the husband of the person to whom Hélène has been given in charge;" and in order to conciliate a person who might

be useful to him, "Monsieur," said he, politely bowing to Dubois, "in that case I am willing to leave a place where I was walking without object."

"Oh," thought Dubois, "here is a polite conspirator. This is not what I want; I must have a quarrel."

Gaston was going away.

"You are deceiving me, Monsieur," said Dubois.

The chevalier turned as though he had been bitten by a serpent; however, prudent for the sake of Hélène, and of the mission he had undertaken, he restrained himself.

"Monsieur," said he, "is it because I was polite that you disbelieve my word?"

"You speak politely because you are afraid; but it is none the less true that I saw you looking at that window."

"Afraid! I, afraid!" cried Chanlay, returning with a bound to face his antagonist; "did you say that I am afraid, Monsieur?"

"I did," replied Dubois.

"Do you, then, seek a quarrel?"

"*Parbleu!* that is clear enough, it seems to me. I see you come from Quimper-Corentin."

"*Paques-Dieu!*" said Gaston, drawing his sword; "come, Monsieur, out with your blade!"

"And you, off with your coat, if you please," said Dubois, throwing aside his cloak, and preparing to take off his coat.

"Why so?" asked the chevalier.

"Because I do not know you, Monsieur, and because those who walk at night frequently have their coats prudently lined with a shirt of mail."

At these words the chevalier's cloak and coat were thrown aside; but at the moment when Gaston was about to rush on his adversary, the drunken man came rolling

between his legs, the player on the jews-harp seized his right arm, the exempt his left arm, and the fourth, who had been invisible, seized him round the body.

"A duel, Monsieur," they cried, "in spite of the king's prohibition!" and they dragged him toward the door.

"An assassination!" murmured Gaston, not daring to cry out, for fear of compromising Hélène. "Cowards!"

"We are betrayed, Monsieur," said Dubois, rolling up Gaston's cloak and coat, and putting them under his arm; "but we shall meet to-morrow, be assured." And he ran toward the hotel, while they shut up Gaston in the basement.

Dubois ran up the staircase and into his room, where he opened the precious pocket-book. He found in a secret division a broken coin and a man's name. This coin was evidently a sign of recognition, and the name was probably that of the man to whom Gaston was sent, and who was called Captain la Jonquière. The paper was oddly folded.

"La Jonquière," said Dubois; "we have our eyes on him already."

He looked over the rest of the pocket-book, — there was nothing else in it.

"It is little," said Dubois, "but it is enough."

He folded a paper like the other, took the name, and rang the bell. Some one gently knocked; the door was fastened inside. "I forgot," said Dubois, opening it, and giving entrance to Monsieur Tapin.

"What have you done with him?" asked Dubois.

"He is in the basement, under guard."

"Take back his cloak and coat, and put them where he threw them, so that he may find them in the same place. Make excuses to him, and set him free. See that nothing is missing from his pockets, — neither pocket-book nor

purse nor handkerchief; it is of the first importance that he should have no suspicion. At the same time you can bring me my coat and cloak, which were left on the field of battle."

Monsieur Tapin bowed low. and went out to obey the orders he had received.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE VISIT.

ALL this took place, as we have said, in the lane under Hélène's windows. She had heard the noise, and when among the voices she thought she distinguished that of the chevalier, she ran anxiously to the window. At the same moment the door of her chamber was opened, and Madame Desroches appeared. She came to beg Hélène to go into the drawing-room, as the expected visitor had arrived.

Hélène started, and nearly fell; her voice failed her, and she followed, silent and trembling.

The room into which Madame Desroches led her was without any light, except what was thrown on the carpet by the last remains of a fire. Madame Desroches took a carafe and poured from it a little water on that dying flame, and thus made the room completely dark. She then withdrew, urging Hélène to have no fear.

A moment later Hélène heard a voice behind that fourth door which had not yet been opened. She started at the sound; almost involuntarily she made a few steps toward the door, and listened eagerly.

"Is she ready?" said the voice.

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied Madame Desroches.

"Monseigneur!" murmured Hélène; "*mon Dieu!* who is coming, then?"

"Is she alone?"

"Yes, Monseigneur.

"Is she aware of my arrival?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"We shall not be interrupted?"

"Monseigneur may rely upon me."

"And no light?"

"None whatever."

The steps approached, then stopped.

"Speak frankly, Madame Desroches," said the voice. "Is she as pretty as they said?"

"More beautiful than your Highness can imagine."

"Your Highness! *Mon Dieu!* what, then, is she saying?" murmured the young girl, almost fainting.

At this moment the door creaked on its hinges and a heavy step approached. Hélène felt all her blood rushing to her heart.

"Mademoiselle," said the voice, "I beg you to receive and hear me."

"I am here," said Hélène, faintly.

"Are you frightened?"

"I confess it, Mon— Shall I say 'Monsieur' or 'Monseigneur'?"

"Say 'my friend.'"

At this moment her hand touched that of the unknown.

"Madame Desroches, are you there?" asked Hélène, drawing back.

"Madame Desroches," said the voice, "tell Mademoiselle that she is as safe as in a temple before God."

"Ah, Monseigneur, I am at your feet, — pardon me!"

"Rise, my child, and seat yourself there. Madame Desroches, close all the doors; and now," continued he, turning toward Hélène, "give me your hand, I beg."

Hélène extended her hand, which again met that of the stranger, and this time it was not withdrawn.

"One would say that he also is trembling," she murmured.

"Tell me, are you afraid, dear child?"

"No," replied Hélène; "but when your hand clasps mine, a strange thrill passes through me."

"Speak to me, Hélène," said the unknown, with an expression of deep tenderness. "I know already that you are beautiful, but this is the first time I have heard your voice. Speak — I am listening."

"But have you seen me, then?" asked Hélène.

"Do you remember that two years ago the abbess had your portrait taken?"

"Yes, I remember, — by an artist who, I was told, came from Paris expressly for that purpose."

"It was I who sent him."

"And was the portrait for you?"

"It is here," said the unknown, taking from his pocket a miniature, which Hélène could feel, though she could not see it.

"But what interest can you have in the portrait of a poor orphan."

"Hélène," said the unknown, after a moment's silence, "I am your father's nearest friend."

"My father! — is he living, then?"

"Yes."

"Shall I ever see him?"

"Perhaps."

"Oh!" said Hélène, pressing the stranger's hand, "I bless you for bringing me this news."

"Dear child!" said he.

"But if he be alive," said Hélène, with a lingering doubt, "why has he been so slow in seeking out his child?"

"He had news of you every month, and though at a distance, watched over you, Hélène."

"And yet," said Hélène, reproachfully, "he has not seen me for sixteen years."

"Believe me, none but the most important reasons would have induced him to deprive himself of this pleasure."

"I believe you, Monsieur; it is not for me to accuse my father."

"No; it is for you to pardon him if he accuses himself."

"For me to pardon him!" exclaimed Hélène, in astonishment.

"Yes; and this pardon which he cannot ask for himself, I ask in his name."

"Monsieur," said Hélène, "I do not understand you."

"Listen, then," said the unknown.

"I listen."

"Yes; but first give me your hand."

"Here it is."

"Your father was an officer in the king's service; at the battle of Nerwinden, where he charged at the head of the king's household troops, one of his followers, called Monsieur de Chaverny, fell near him, pierced by a ball. Your father wished to assist him; but the wound was mortal, and the wounded man, who knew that it was so, said, 'Think not of me, but of my child.' Your father pressed his hand as a promise, and the man fell back and died, as though he only waited this assurance before closing his eyes. You are listening, are you not, Hélène?"

"Oh, need you ask such a question?" said the young girl.

"At the end of the campaign, your father's first care was for the little orphan. She was a charming child of from ten to twelve years of age, who promised to be as beautiful as you are. The death of Monsieur de Chaverny, her father, left her without support or fortune; your

father placed her at the convent of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and announced that at a proper age he should give her a dowry."

"I thank God," cried Hélène, "for having made me the child of a man who so nobly kept his promise!"

"Wait, Hélène," said the unknown, "for now comes the time when your father ceases to deserve your praises."

Hélène was silent, and the unknown continued: "Your father, indeed, watched over the orphan till her eighteenth year. She was an adorable young girl, and his visits to the convent became longer and more frequent than they should have been; your father began to love his protégée. At first he was frightened at his own love, for he remembered his promise to her dying father. He begged the superior to look for a suitable husband for Mademoiselle de Chaverny, and was told that her nephew, a young Breton, having seen her, loved her, and had already sought to obtain her hand."

"Well, Monsieur?" asked Hélène, perceiving that the unknown hesitated to proceed.

"Well, your father's surprise was great, Hélène, when he learned from the superior that Mademoiselle de Chaverny had replied that she did not wish to marry, that her greatest desire was to remain in the convent where she had been brought up, and that the happiest day of her life would be that on which she should pronounce her vows."

"She loved some one," said Hélène.

"Yes, my child, you are right. Alas! we cannot avoid our fate; Mademoiselle de Chaverny loved your father. For a long time she kept her secret; but one day, when your father begged her to renounce her strange wish to take the veil, the poor child confessed all. Strong against his love when he did not believe it returned, he suc-

cumbed when he found he had but to desire and to obtain. They were both so young — your father scarcely twenty-five, she not eighteen — that they forgot the world, and only remembered that they could be happy."

"But, since they loved," said Hélène, "why did they not marry?"

"Union was impossible, on account of the distance which separated them. Have they not told you, Hélène, that your father is of very high rank?"

"Alas, yes," said Hélène; "I know it."

"During a year," continued he, "their happiness was complete, and surpassed their hopes; but at the end of that time you came into the world, and then —"

"Well?" asked the young girl, timidly.

"Your birth cost your mother's life."

Hélène sobbed.

"Yes," continued the unknown, in a voice full of emotion, "yes, Hélène, weep for your mother; she was a noble and saintly woman, of whom — through his griefs, his pleasures, even his follies — your father retains a tender recollection; he transferred to you all his love for her."

"And yet," said Hélène, "he consented to put me away from him, and has never again seen me."

"Hélène, on this point pardon your father, for it was not his fault. You were born in 1703, at the most austere period of Louis XIV.'s reign. Your father was already out of favor with the king, or rather with Madame de Maintenon; and for your sake, perhaps more than for his own, he decided to part from you. He sent you into Bretagne, confiding you to Mother Ursula, superior of the convent where you were brought up. At length, Louis XIV. being dead, and everything having changed through all France, he has decided to bring you nearer to him. During the journey, however, you must have seen that

his care was over you, and when he knew that you were at Rambouillet, he could not wait till to-morrow, — he has come to you here, Hélène."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" cried Hélène, "is this true?"

"And in seeing, or rather in listening to you, he thinks he hears your mother, — the same purity of expression, the same accent in the voice. Hélène, Hélène, that you may be happier than she was is his heartfelt prayer!"

"Oh, Heavens!" cried Hélène, "this emotion shown by your trembling hand! Monsieur, you say my father has come to meet me?"

"Yes."

"Here, at Rambouillet?"

"Yes."

"You say he is happy to see me again?"

"Oh, yes, very happy!"

"But this happiness was insufficient, was it not? He has wished to speak to me, to tell me himself the story of my birth, that I may thank him for his love, that I may fall at his feet, that I may ask his blessing. Oh!" cried Hélène, kneeling, "oh, I am at your feet; bless me, Father!"

"Hélène, my child, my daughter!" cried the unknown, "not at my feet, but in my arms!"

"My father, my father!" murmured Hélène.

"And yet," he continued, "I came with a different intention, prepared to deny all, to remain a stranger to you; but having you so near me, pressing your hand, hearing your voice, I had not the strength. But do not make me repent my weakness, and let secrecy —"

"I swear it by my mother's grave!" cried Hélène.

That is all I desire," cried the unknown. "Now , for I must leave you."

What, already, my father?"

"It must be so."

"Speak, then, Father; I am ready to obey you."

"To-morrow you leave for Paris; there is a house there prepared for you. Madame Desroches will accompany you; and at the very first moment that I can do so, I will come there to see you."

"It will be soon, Father, will it not? For do not forget that I am alone in the world."

"As soon as possible;" and pressing his lips to Hélène's forehead, the unknown imprinted on it one of those pure and chaste kisses which are as sweet to the heart of a father as a kiss of love to the heart of a lover.

Ten minutes later Madame Desroches entered with a light. Hélène was on her knees praying; without rising, she signed to her to place the light on the chimney-piece. Madame Desroches obeyed and withdrew.

Hélène, after praying for some time, rose, and looked around her, as though for some evidence that the whole was not a dream; her own emotion, however, assured her that it was really a great event in her life which had taken place. Then the thought of Gaston rose to her mind; this father whom she had so dreaded to see — this father, so good and kind, who himself had loved so ardently and suffered so deeply — would not do violence to her love. Besides, Gaston, although springing from a race that was neither historic nor illustrious, was the last scion of one of the oldest families in Bretagne; and beyond all this, she loved him so much that she would die if she were separated from him, and her father would not wish her death. The obstacles on Gaston's side could be but slight in comparison, and would doubtless be easily overcome. Hélène, her mind full of pleasing thoughts, fell asleep at length, and passed from a joyous evening to happy dreams.

Gaston, set at liberty with many apologies from those who pretended to have mistaken him for another person, went to get his coat and cloak, which he was overjoyed to find where he had left them. He hastened back to the hotel, and when he had carefully closed the door of his chamber he eagerly opened his pocket-book. He found it to be as he last saw it, and in the secret division were the half of a gold coin and Captain la Jonquière's address; the latter he now burned, for prudential reasons. Then if not more joyous, at any rate more tranquil, regarding the event of the evening as one of the thousand accidents which may happen to one who walks abroad in the night, and having given Oven his instructions for the next day, he went to bed murmuring Hélène's name, as she had murmured his.

Meanwhile, two carriages rolled away from the door of the Tigre Royal; in the first were two gentlemen in travelling costume, preceded and followed by outriders.

In the second was a single traveller, wrapped in a large cloak; this carriage followed close behind the other as far as the Barrière de l'Étoile, where they separated, and while the first stopped at the Palais Royal, the other drew up at a little gate in the Rue de Valois.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN WHICH DUBOIS PROVES THE EFFICIENCY OF HIS PRIVATE POLICE.

WHATEVER might have been the fatigues of the preceding night, the Duc d'Orléans always gave his mornings to business. He generally began to work, alone or with Dubois, before he was dressed; then came a short and select levée, followed again by audiences, which occupied him till eleven or twelve o'clock; then the chiefs of the councils — La Vrillère first, and then Leblanc — came to give an account of their espionage; then Torcy, to bring his abstracts of important letters. At half-past two the regent had his chocolate, which he took in public, while laughing and chatting. This interruption lasted half an hour, then came the audience hour for ladies; after that he went to the Duchesse d'Orléans, then to the young king, whom he visited every day, and to whom he always displayed the greatest reverence and respect. Once a week he received foreign ministers, and on Sundays heard Mass in his private chapel.

At six o'clock on council days, at five o'clock on others, all business was over; then the regent would go to the opera, or to Madame de Berri, with whom, however, he had quarrelled now, on account of her marriage with Riom. Then came those suppers which became so celebrated, — at St. Cloud or St. Germain in summer, at the Palais Royal in winter. At these suppers there were ten to fifteen persons, men and women; and we need not

inform the reader that the regent's presence among them sometimes added to their license and freedom, but never restrained it.

At these suppers, where absolute equality reigned, kings, ministers, chancellors, ladies of the court, were all passed in review, discussed, abused; everything might be said, everything told, everything done, — provided only that it were wittily said, told, or done. When all the guests had arrived the doors were closed and barred, so that it was impossible to reach the regent until the following morning, however urgent might be the necessity.

Dubois was rarely present at these suppers, — his ill-health forbade it; and this was the time chosen to pick him to pieces. The regent merrily assisted in the dissection of his ex-tutor. Dubois knew that he often furnished the amusement of these suppers; but he also knew that by the morning the regent invariably forgot what had been said the night before, and he was hardly disquieted by all these attacks upon his influence, which, though destroyed every night, was increasing every day.

For the regent knew that he could count on Dubois's vigilance. While he slept or feasted Dubois watched. Dubois, who appeared scarcely able to stand upright, was indefatigable in his activity. He attended the regent like a shadow, and seemed to have the gift of ubiquity.

When Dubois returned from Rambouillet, he called Maître Tapin, who had returned on horseback, and talked with him for an hour, after which he slept four or five hours; then, rising, he presented himself at the door of his Royal Highness. The regent was still asleep.

Dubois approached the bed and contemplated him with a smile, which at once resembled that of an ape and a demon. At length he decided to wake him. "Holloa, Monseigneur, wake up!" he cried.

The duke opened his eyes, and seeing Dubois, he turned his face to the wall, saying, "Ah, is that you, Abbé; go to the devil!"

"Monseigneur, I have just been there; but he was too busy to receive me, and sent me to you."

"Leave me alone; I am tired."

"I dare say; the night was stormy, was it not?"

"What do you mean?" asked the duke, turning half round.

"I mean that the way you spent the night does not suit a man who makes appointments for seven in the morning."

"Did I appoint an interview with you at seven o'clock, Abbé?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, yesterday morning, before you went to St. Germain."

"*Pardieu*, it is true!" said the regent.

"Monseigneur did not anticipate that the night would be so fatiguing."

"Fatiguing! I left table at seven."

"Yes, but afterwards?"

"Well, what afterwards?"

"Are you satisfied, Monseigneur, and was the young person worth the journey?"

"What journey?"

"The journey you took after you left the table at seven."

"One would think, to hear you, that from St. Germain here is a long distance."

"No, Monseigneur is right; it is but a few steps, but there is a way of prolonging the distance."

"What is that?"

"Going round by Rambouillet."

"You are dreaming, Abbé."

"Possibly, Monseigneur. I will tell you my dream; it will at least prove to your Highness that even in my dreams I do not forget you."

"Some new nonsense?"

"Not at all. I dreamed that Monseigneur started the stag at Le Treillage, and that the animal, after some battling worthy of a stag of high birth, was taken at Chambourcy."

"So far, your dream resembles the truth; continue, Abbé."

"After which, Monseigneur returned to St. Germain, sat down to table at half-past five, and ordered that the carriage without arms should be prepared and harnessed, with four horses, at half-past seven."

"Not bad, Abbé, not bad; go on."

"At half-past seven, Monseigneur dismissed every one except Lafare, with whom he entered the carriage. Am I right?"

"Go on; go on."

"The carriage went toward Rambouillet, and arrived there at a quarter to ten. But at the entrance of the town it stopped; Lafare went on in the carriage to the Tigre Royal, Monseigneur following as an outrider."

"Here your dream becomes confused, Abbé, does it not?"

"No, Monseigneur, not at all."

"Continue, then."

"Well, while Lefare pretended to eat a bad supper, which was served by waiters who called him Excellency, Monseigneur gave his horse to a page and went to a little pavilion."

"Demon that you are! where then, were you hidden?"

"I, Monseigneur, have not left the Palais Royal, where I slept like a dormouse, and the proof is that I am telling you my dream."

"And what was there in the pavilion?"

"First, at the door, a horrible duenna, tall, thin, dry, and yellow."

"Dubois, I will recommend you to Desroches, and the first time she sees you she will tear your eyes out."

"Then inside, *mon Dieu!* inside —"

"Ah, you could not see that, even in a dream, my poor Abbé."

"Monseigneur, you may take away the 500,000 francs which you allow me for my private police, if — by their aid — I did not see into the interior."

"Well, what did you see?"

"Faith, Monseigneur, a charming little Bretonne, sixteen or seventeen years old, beautiful, coming direct from the Augustine convent at Clisson, accompanied to Rambouillet by one of the sisters, whose troublesome presence was soon dispensed with, was it not?"

"Dubois, I have often thought you were the Devil, who has taken the form of an abbé to ruin me."

"To save you, Monseigneur, to save you."

"To save me? I do not believe it."

"Well," said Dubois, with his demoniac smile, "are you pleased with her, Monseigneur?"

"Enchanted, Dubois; she is charming."

"*Pardieu!* you have for that reason brought her a long journey; if she were not beautiful you would be cheated."

The regent frowned, but when he reflected that Dubois, while knowing everything up to that point, was ignorant of all the rest, his frown gave place to a smile, "Dubois," said he, "certainly, you are a great man."

"Ah, Monseigneur, no one but you doubts it; and yet you disgrace me —"

"Disgrace you!"

"Yes; you hide your love affairs from me."

"Come, don't be vexed, Dubois."

"There is reason, however, you must confess, Monseigneur."

"Why?"

"Because, upon my word, I might have found for you something as good, and perhaps better. Why did you not tell me you wanted a Bretonne? You would have had one, Monseigneur, you would have had one."

"Really?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, yes; I would have found plenty of Bretonnes."

"Like her?"

"Even better."

"Abbé!"

"*Parbleu!* — a precious possession you have secured yonder!"

"Monsieur Dubois!"

"You think you have found a treasure, perhaps?"

"Holloa, holloa!"

"Well, when you know what your Bretonne is, and to what you expose yourself — "

"Do not jest, Abbé, I beg."

"Ah, decidedly, Monseigneur, you distress me."

"What do you mean?"

"That you are taken by a glance; a night intoxicates you, and on the morrow there is no one to compare to the new-comer. Is she then very pretty?"

"Charming."

"And discreet, — virtue itself; one of a hundred, is she not?"

"You are right."

"Well, I tell you, Monseigneur, you are lost."

"I?"

"Yes; your Bretonne is a jade."

"Silence, Abbé!"

"Why silence?"

"I forbid you to say another word," said the regent, with a serious air.

"Monseigneur, you too have had a bad dream — let me explain it."

"Monsieur Joseph, I will send you to the Bastille."

"As you please, Monseigneur; but still you must know that this girl —"

"Is my daughter, Monsieur l'Abbé!"

Dubois drew back stupefied.

"Your daughter, Monseigneur! And who the devil is her mother?"

"An honest woman, who had the honor of dying without knowing you."

"And the child?"

"The child has been concealed, that she might not be sullied by the looks of venomous beings like you."

Dubois bowed profoundly, and withdrew in a respectful manner and with the appearance of a man completely disheartened; the regent followed him with a triumphant look until he had closed the door. But Dubois, as we know, was not easily discomfited, and he had hardly closed that door which separated him from the regent, when he perceived, in the obscurity which for a moment had veiled his eyes, a light which to him was a brilliant illumination. "And I was saying," he murmured as he descended the stairs, "that this conspiracy would hatch my archbishop's-mitre. Fool that I was! — if gently managed it will hatch my cardinal's-hat."

## CHAPTER XII.

### RAMBOUILLET AGAIN.

At the appointed hour Gaston presented himself at Hélène's domicile, but Madame Desroches made some difficulty about admitting him. Hélène, however, said firmly that she was quite at liberty to judge for herself what was right, and that she was determined to see Monsieur de Livry, who had come to take leave of her. It will be remembered that this was the name which Gaston had assumed during the journey, and which he intended to retain, except when with those connected with his mission to Paris.

Madame Desroches went to her room somewhat out of humor, and even attempted to overhear the conversation; but Hélène, suspecting her intentions, closed and bolted the door opening into the corridor.

"Ah, Gaston," said she, "I have been expecting you. I did not sleep last night."

"Nor I, Hélène; but allow me to admire your magnificent surroundings."

Hélène smiled.

"Yourself first. That silk dress, that coiffure, — how beautiful you are, seen thus!"

"You do not appear much pleased, however."

Gaston made no reply, but continued his investigations.

"These rich hangings, these costly pictures, all prove that your protectors are opulent, Hélène."

"I believe they are," said Hélène, smiling; "yet I am told that these hangings and this gilding, which you admire, are old and unfashionable, and are to be replaced by new."

"Ah, Hélène, you will become a great lady," said Gaston, sighing; "already I am kept waiting for an audience."

"My dear Gaston, did not you wait for hours in your little boat on the lake?"

"You were then in the convent. I waited the abbess's pleasure."

"That title is sacred, is it not?"

"Oh, yes!"

"It gives security, imposes respect and obedience."

"Doubtless."

"Well, judge of my delight. Here I find the same protection, the same love, only more powerful, more lasting."

"What!" exclaimed Gaston, surprised.

"I find —"

"Speak, in Heaven's name!"

"— my father!"

"Your father! Ah, my dear Hélène, I share your joy; what happiness! — a father to watch over my Hélène, my wife!"

"To watch — from afar."

"What! does he keep himself apart from you?"

"Alas, it seems that the world separates us."

"Is it a secret?"

"A secret even to me, or you may be sure you should know all. I have no secrets from you, Gaston."

"A misfortune of birth — a proscription in your family — some temporary obstacle?"

"I do not know."

"Decidedly, it is a secret; but," said he, smiling, "I

permit you to be discreet with me, if your father ordered it. However, may I ask you some more questions?"

"Oh, yes."

"Are you pleased? Is your father a man of whom you can be proud?"

"I think so, — his heart seems noble and good; his voice is sweet and melodious."

"His voice! But is he like you?"

"I do not know; I have not seen him."

"Not seen him?"

"Certainly not, — it was dark."

"Your father did not wish to see his daughter! — you, so beautiful! Oh, what indifference!"

"No, Gaston, he is not indifferent, — he knows well how I look; he has my portrait, — that portrait which made you so jealous last spring."

"But I do not understand this."

"It was dark, I tell you."

"In that case one might light these chandeliers," said Gaston, with a cold smile.

"That is well, when one wishes to be seen; but when one has reasons for concealment — "

"What are you saying?" interrupted Gaston, becoming thoughtful; "what reason can a father have for hiding from his own daughter?"

"Excellent reasons, I believe, and you should understand them better than I can."

"Oh, Hélène!" said Gaston, gloomily, "with what terrible ideas you fill my mind."

"You alarm me with your terrors!"

"Tell me, — of what did your father speak?"

"Of his deep love for me."

Gaston started.

"He swore to me that in future I should be happy;

that there should be no more uncertainty as to my fate; that he would despise all those considerations which have induced him hitherto to disown me as a daughter."

"Words, words; but what proof did he give you? Pardon me these foolish questions, Hélène; I am looking into an abyss of calamities. I could wish that for a moment your angelic innocence, of which I am so proud, might give place to the infernal sagacity of a fiend. You would then understand me, and I should not need to subject you to this interrogatory, which now is so necessary."

"I do not understand your question, Gaston. I do not know how to reply to you."

"Did he show you much affection?"

"Yes."

"But, in the darkness, when he wished to speak to you —"

"He took my hand, and his hand trembled more than mine."

Gaston clinched his hands, shivering with rage.

"He embraced you, paternally, did he not?"

"He gave me a single kiss on the forehead, which I received on my knees."

"Hélène!" he cried, "my fears were not groundless! You are betrayed, — you are the victim of an infernal plot! Hélène, this man who conceals himself, who fears the light, who calls you his child, is not your father."

"Gaston, you break my heart!"

"Hélène, angels might envy your innocence; but on earth all is abused, — even angels are insulted, profaned, by men. This man, whom I will know, whom I will seize and force to have confidence in your love and honor, shall tell me — if he be not the vilest of beings — whether I am to call him father, or kill him as an infamous villain!"

"Gaston, your brain is wandering; what can lead you

to suspect such frightful treachery? And since you arouse my suspicions, since you hold a light over those ignoble labyrinths of the human heart which I refused to contemplate, I will speak to you with the same freedom. Was I not in this man's power? Is not this house his? Are not the people by whom I am surrounded devoted to his orders? Gaston, if you love me, you will ask my pardon for what you have thought and said of my father."

Gaston, despairing, threw himself into an armchair.

"Do not destroy one of the purest and holiest joys I have ever tasted," continued Hélène. "Do not poison the happiness of a life which I have often wept to think was solitary and abandoned, without other affection than that of which Heaven forbids us to be lavish. Let my filial love compensate for the remorse which I sometimes feel for loving you almost to idolatry."

"Hélène, forgive me," cried Gaston. "Yes, you are right; I sully your pure joys by my touch, and perhaps also the noble affection of your father; but in Heaven's name, Hélène, give some heed to the fears of my experience and my love. Criminal passions often speculate on innocent credulity. The argument you use is weak. To show at once a guilty love would be unlike a skilful corrupter; but by degrees to eradicate virtue from your heart, to beguile you by a novel luxury pleasing to one of your age, to accustom your mind to pleasure and your senses to new impressions, to win you at last by persuasion, — is a sweeter victory than that of violence. Hélène, listen to my prudence of five-and-twenty years — I say my prudence, for it is my love that speaks, that love which you would see so humble, so devoted to the least wish of a father whom I knew to be your father indeed."

Hélène lowered her head and made no answer.

"I implore you," continued Gaston, "not to adopt yet a final conclusion, but to watch everything around you. Suspect the perfumes which are given you, the wine which is offered you, the sleep which is promised you. Watch over yourself, Hélène; you are my happiness, my honor, my life."

"My friend, I will obey you; this will not keep me from loving my father."

"Adore him, Hélène, if I am wrong."

"You are a noble friend, Gaston. We are agreed then?"

"At the slightest suspicion write to me."

"Write! You leave me then?"

"I must go to Paris on business. I shall be at the hotel Muid d'Amour, Rue des Bourdonnais. Write down this address, and do not show it to any one."

"Why so many precautions?"

Gaston hesitated.

"Because, if your devoted protector were known, his plans for aiding you, in case of bad intentions, might be frustrated."

"You are somewhat mysterious, Gaston. I have a father who conceals himself, and a lover — this word I can hardly speak — who is going to do the same."

"But you know the intentions of the latter," said Gaston, forcing a laugh to conceal his agitation and embarrassment.

"Ah, Madame Desroches is coming back. She thinks our interview too long. I am as much under tutelage as at the convent."

Gaston, dismissed, imprinted a kiss on the hand Hélène held out to him. As Madame Desroches appeared, Hélène made to him a ceremonious reverence, to which he responded with equal formality, — Madame Desroches mean-

while fixing on him a searching gaze as if to impress upon her memory the least detail of his appearance.

Gaston immediately set out for Paris. Oven had awaited him with impatience, and this time could not reproach his master with being slow, for in three hours they had reached the goal of their journey.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CAPTAIN LA JONQUIÈRE.

THERE was, as the reader has learned, in the Rue des Bourdonnais, a hotel where one could lodge, eat, and drink.

In his nocturnal interview with Dubois, Tapin had received the famous name of La Jonquière, and had transmitted it to L'Éveillé, who had passed it to all the chiefs of police, who had begun to search for the suspected officer in all the equivocal houses in Paris. The conspiracy of Cellamare, which we have related in our history of the Chevalier d'Harmental, — which has the same relation to the commencement of the regency that the present history has to its close, — had taught them that there especially conspirators were to be found; and this affair of Bretagne was only the tail of the Spanish conspiracy. "*In cauda venenum*," said Dubois, who clung to his Latin.

It was, however, by luck or by cleverness, Maître Tapin himself who, in the Rue des Bourdonnais and in the hotel Muid d'Amour, found the famous La Jonquière, who for the time being was Dubois's nightmare.

The landlord took Tapin to be an old attorney's-clerk, and replied to his questions, politely, that Captain la Jonquière was in the hotel, but was asleep.

Tapin asked no more. La Jonquière was asleep; therefore he was in bed, for it was only six in the morning; if he were in bed, then he was living at the inn.

Tapin went back to the Palais Royal, and found Dubois, who had just left the regent. A number of false La Jonquières had already been discovered by his emissaries. One was a smuggler, called La Jonciére, whom L'Éveillé had found and arrested. A second was La Jonquille, sergeant in the French Guards. A third was named La Jupinière. Already ten persons had been arrested, and hardly one half of the searching squadron had come in.

"Well," said Dubois, when Tapin had made his report, "you have found the real Captain la Jonquière, then?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"His real name is La Jonquière?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"L-a, La; J-o-n, Jon; q-u-i-è-r-e, quière?" continued Dubois, spelling the word.

"La Jon-qui-ère," repeated Tapin.

"A captain?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"What does he do?"

"He loiters about and drinks."

"It must be he," said Dubois; "and does he pay?" He evidently attached great importance to the question.

"Very promptly, Monseigneur."

"Well, Tapin, you are a man of sense."

"Monseigneur," said Tapin, modestly, "you flatter me; but it is a very simple matter, — if he did n't pay he could n't be a dangerous man."

Dubois rewarded Tapin with a gratuity of ten louis, gave him some new directions, left his secretary to inform the police agents as they arrived that he had all the La Jonquière he wanted, and set out on foot toward the Rue des Bourdonnais.

Let us say a word regarding the interior of the inn to

which we are about to introduce our readers. It was partly hotel, partly drinking saloon; the dwelling-rooms were on the first floor, and the tavern rooms on the ground-floor. The principal of these latter, the common room, contained four oak tables and a quantity of red and white curtains; some benches along the walls, some glasses on a sideboard, some handsomely framed pictures, all blackened and rendered nauseous by the smoke from pipes, completed the furnishing of this room, in which sat a fat man with a red face, thirty-five or forty years old, and a little pale girl of twelve or fourteen. This was the landlord and his only daughter and heiress. A servant was cooking a ragout in the kitchen.

As the clock struck one, a French guard entered, and stopping at the threshold, murmured, "Rue des Bourdonnais, Muid d'Amour, in the common room, — to sit at the table on the left, and wait." Then, in obedience to this direction, the worthy defender of his country, whistling a tune and twirling his mustache, seated himself at the place indicated. Scarcely had he had time to seat himself and strike his fist on the table, which, in the language of all taverns, means "Some wine," when a second guard, dressed exactly like the first, appeared at the door, murmured some words, and after a little hesitation, seated himself by the other.

The two soldiers looked at each other, and both exclaimed, "Ah!" which in all languages means surprise.

"It is you, Grippart?" said one.

"It is you, L'Enlevant?" said the other.

"What are you doing in this tavern?"

"And you?"

"I don't know."

"Nor I."

"You come here, then —"

"Under orders."

"That is my case."

"And you are waiting —"

"For a man who is coming."

"With a watchword."

"And on this watchword?"

"I am to obey as though it were Tapin himself."

"Just so; and, in the mean time, they have given me a pistole for drink."

"They have given me a pistole also; but I was not told to drink."

"And in a case of doubt —"

"In doubt, as the sage says, I do not abstain."

"In that case let us drink." And he raised his hand to call the landlord; but it was not necessary, for he was standing near, awaiting orders.

"Some wine," cried the two guards.

"Orléans," added one; "I like that."

The landlord brought an uncorked bottle. The two drinkers filled their glasses, emptied them, and then placed them on the table, each with a different grimace, but both intended to express the same opinion.

When the host had left them, one said to the other, "You know more of this than you have told me?"

"I know it concerns a certain captain," answered the other.

"Yes; just so. But I suppose we shall have aid to arrest him?"

"Doubtless; two to one is not enough."

"You forget the man with the watchword; he is to help us."

"I hope there will be two of them, strong men. But it seems to me I hear something."

"Yes; some one is coming down stairs."

"Hush!"

"Silence!"

And the soldiers, much more occupied by their commission than if they had really been soldiers, kept an eye turned toward the staircase while they drank.

They were not deceived; the step on the staircase approached, and they saw, first, some legs, then a body, then a head descending. The legs were covered with fine silk stockings and white cashmere breeches, the body with a tight blue coat, and the head with a three-cornered hat, jauntily placed over one ear. Eyes less practised than those of the guards would have recognized a captain in that apparition; his epaulets and his sword left no room for doubt as to his rank. This captain, who was no other than Captain la Jonquière, was about five feet two inches high, rather fat, and had a sagacious air; one would have supposed that he suspected spies under the uniform of the guards, for he turned his back to them at once, and entered into conversation with his host in a somewhat assumed tone and manner.

"In truth," said he, "I should have dined here, and this delicious perfume of stewed kidneys would have tempted me, but some good fellows are expecting me at the Galoubet de Paphos. Perhaps a young man may come here this morning, but I could not wait any longer. Should he ask for a hundred pistoles, say that I shall be back in an hour, and beg him to wait."

"Very well, Captain," said the host.

"Some wine," said the guard.

"Ah," said the captain, throwing an apparently careless glance at the drinkers, "here are some soldiers who have but little respect for an epaulet." Then, turning to the host, — "Serve these gentlemen; you see they are in a hurry."

"Ah," said one of them, rising, "as soon as Monsieur will permit."

"Certainly I permit it," said La Jonquière, smiling with his lips, while inclined to pommel the two companions, whose appearance displeased him; but prudence prevailed, and he moved toward the door.

"But, Captain," said the host, stopping him, "you have not told me the name of the gentleman you expect."

La Jonquière hesitated. After a moment, "Monsieur Gaston de Chanlay," he replied.

"Gaston de Chanlay," repeated the host. "I hope I shall remember the name. Gaston — Gascon. Ah, I shall remember Gascon. Chanlay; ah, I shall think of Chandelle."

"That is it," repeated La Jonquière, gravely; "Gascon de Chandelle. I hope, my dear host, that you will open a course of mnemonics; if all your rules could be as good as that, you would make your fortune."

The host smiled at the compliment, and Captain la Jonquière started off, after looking up and down the street as if consulting the weather, but in fact, examining the shadows of the gates and the corners of the houses. He had not taken a hundred steps in the Rue St. Honoré before Dubois presented himself at the door. He had passed La Jonquière, but never having seen that important personage had not recognized him. It was therefore with a boldness amounting to effrontery that he presented himself at the door, dressed throughout in the garb of a shopkeeper from the country.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MONSIEUR MOUTONNET, DRAPER AT ST. GERMAIN-EN-LAYE.

Dubois, after a quick glance at the guards, who continued drinking in their corner, at once addressed himself to the host, who was walking up and down among the benches. "Monsieur," said he, timidly, "does Captain la Jonquière lodge here? I wish to speak to him."

"You wish to speak to Captain la Jonquière?" said the host, examining the new-comer from head to foot.

"If it is possible," said Dubois; "I confess that it will give me pleasure."

"Are you sure that is the person you want?" asked the host, who did not think this was the man La Jonquière expected.

"I think so," said Dubois, modestly.

"A short, fat man?"

"Yes."

"Drinks his brandy neat?"

"That is the man."

"Always ready with his cane if he is not attended to directly?"

"Ah, that is Captain la Jonquière!"

"You know him, then?"

"Not in the least," said Dubois.

"True, for you must have met him at the door."

"*Diable!* Is he out?" said Dubois, with a start of ill-humor badly repressed. "Thank you." He at once

perceived the imprudence he had committed, and called to his face the most amiable of smiles.

"He has not been gone five minutes."

"But he is coming back?"

"In an hour."

"May I wait for him, Monsieur?"

"Certainly, if you take something meanwhile."

"Give me some brandy-cherries," said Dubois. "I never drink wine except with meals."

The two guards exchanged a contemptuous smile. The host hastened to bring the cherries.

"Ah!" said Dubois, "only five! At St. Germain-en-Laye they give six."

"Possibly, Monsieur; for at St. Germain-en-Laye they have no excise to pay."

"That is true," said Dubois, — "that is perfectly true. I forgot the excise duties; you must excuse me, Monsieur," and he began to nibble a cherry; but in spite of all his self-control, he could not suppress a grimace of the most pronounced description. The host, who was watching him, observed that grimace with a smile of satisfaction.

"Where does the captain lodge?" asked Dubois.

"There is the door of his room; he preferred the ground-floor."

"I understand," murmured Dubois; "the windows look into the public road."

"And there is a door opening into the Rue des Deux-Boules."

"Ah, there is a door opening into the Rue des Deux-Boules? *Peste*, how convenient that is! And does not the noise annoy him?"

"Oh, he has another room upstairs; sometimes he sleeps in one, sometimes in the other."

"Like the tyrant Dionysius," said Dubois, who could not refrain from Latin or historical quotations.

"What?" said mine host.

Dubois saw that he had committed another imprudence, and bit his lip. At this moment one of the soldiers called for wine, and the host darted off to wait upon him. Dubois turned to the two guards. "Thank you," said he.

"What is it, bourgeois?" asked they.

"France and the regent," replied Dubois.

"The watchword!" cried both the pretended soldiers, rising.

"Enter this room," said Dubois, showing La Jonquière's room. "Open the door into the Rue des Deux-Boules, and hide behind a curtain, under a table, in a closet, wherever you can. If, when I come in, I can see so much as an ear, you will have no pay for six months."

The two men carefully emptied their glasses, like men little disposed to lose the good things of the world, and quickly entered the room, while Dubois, who saw they had forgotten to pay, put a piece of twelve sous on the table. Then opening the window, and calling to the driver of a carriage standing before the door, "L'Éveillé," said he, "take the carriage around to the little door in the Rue des Deux-Boules, and tell Tapin to come up when I knock on the window with my fingers; he has his orders. Be off!"

He closed the window, and in a moment heard the noise of the carriage going away. It was time, the active innkeeper returned, and at a glance perceived the absence of the guards. "Holloa!" he cried, "where are my men?"

"A sergeant came and called them away."

"But they have not paid!"

"Yes, they left a twelve-sou piece on the table, as you see."

"*Diable!* twelve sous; and my Orléans wine is eight sous the bottle."

"Ah!" said Dubois, "no doubt they thought that as they were soldiers you would make a reduction."

"At any rate," said the host, consoling himself, "it is not all lost; and in our trade one must expect this kind of thing."

"You have nothing of the sort to fear with Captain la Jonquière?"

"Oh, no, he is the best of lodgers; he pays without a word, and ready money. True, he never likes anything."

"Oh, that may be his manner," said Dubois.

"You have hit the word I was trying to think of, — yes, it is his manner."

"What you tell me of his prompt payment pleases me."

"Have you come to ask for money? He said he expected some one to whom he owed a hundred pistoles."

"No; on the contrary, I bring him fifty louis."

"Fifty louis! *peste!*" said the host, "what a pretty sum! I misunderstood him, then; instead of expecting to pay, he no doubt was expecting to receive. Are you the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay?"

"Does he expect the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay?" said Dubois, with a joy he could not conceal.

"He told me so," said the host, somewhat surprised by the eagerness with which the question was put. "I ask you again, — are you the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay?"

"No; I am not noble. I am called Moutonnet."

"Nobility is nothing," said the host, sententiously. "One may be called Moutonnet, and be an honest man."

"Yes; Moutonnet," said Dubois, assenting with a nod to the proposition of his host, — "Moutonnet, draper at St. Germain-en-Laye."

"And you have fifty louis for the captain?"

"Yes. In turning over some old accounts of my father's, I find he owed fifty louis to Captain la Jonquière's father; and I have had no peace till, in default of the father, who is dead, I found the son."

"But do you know, Monsieur Moutonnet," replied the host, surprised by this exalted sense of honor, "that there are not many debtors such as you are?"

"The Moutonnets are all the same, from father to son. When we are owed anything we are pitiless. Listen. There was an honest fellow who owed Moutonnet and Son one hundred and sixty francs; my grandfather put him in prison, and there he has been for the three generations and he has just died there. I calculate that during the thirty years he was there he cost us twelve thousand francs; but we maintained the principle. But I beg your pardon for keeping you with all this nonsense; and here is a new customer for you."

"Eh! oh, yes," said the host; "it is the person for whom you are waiting."

"The brave Captain la Jonquière!" exclaimed Dubois.

"Yes; come, Captain, some one is waiting for you."

The captain had not lost his earlier suspicions. In the street he had seen a number of strange faces which to him had a sinister appearance. He entered, therefore, full of distrust. He threw a searching glance around, and noticing the absence of the guards, felt somewhat reassured; he saw nothing in the appearance of the new-comer to disturb his mind. But those persons who have an uneasy conscience come at last to draw from their anxiety courage for their apprehensions, — or rather, they become so familiar

with fear that they will no longer listen to it. La Jonquière, confiding in the honest appearance of the draper from St. Germain-en-Laye, saluted him politely. Dubois responded with a most courteous greeting.

La Jonquière asked the host if the friend he had expected had arrived.

"No one but Monsieur. However, you lose nothing by the change; the one was coming to obtain a hundred pistoles, the other comes to bring you fifty louis."

La Jonquière, surprised, turned to Dubois, who repeated the same story he had told to the host, and with such success that La Jonquière, calling for wine, asked Dubois to follow him into his room.

Dubois approached the window to get his hat which was lying on a chair, and while La Jonquière talked with the host, he quietly tapped on the glass with his fingers. At that moment the captain turned around.

"But shall I not be in the way in your room?" asked Dubois.

"Not at all, not at all. And there is a pleasing view from my windows; as we drink we can look out and see the passers-by, — there are some pretty women in the Rue des Bourdonnais."

They entered the room. Dubois made a sign to Tapin, who appeared in the first room, followed by two men; then, like a man of good breeding, he shut the door behind him.

Tapin's two followers went to the window of the common room and drew the curtains, while Tapin placed himself behind the door of Jonquière's room so as to be hidden by it when it opened. The host now returned from La Jonquière's room to write down the receipt for the money which La Jonquière had just paid him for the wine, when Tapin threw a handkerchief over his mouth,

and carried him off like a feather to a second carriage standing at the door. One of the men seized the little girl, who was cooking eggs; the other carried off the servant, and soon they were all on the way to St. Lazare.

Tapin remained behind, and taking from a closet a calico apron and waistcoat, signed to a loiterer who was looking in at the window, and who quickly transformed himself into a publican. At this moment a violent noise was heard in the captain's room, as of a table thrown down, with bottles and glasses; then oaths, then the clinking of a sword, then — nothing. Immediately a carriage was heard rolling away up the Rue des Deux-Boules. Tapin, who had been listening with an air of anxiety, ready to dart into the chamber, knife in hand, now straightened himself up and looked happy. "Bravo!" said he, "the game is played."

"It was time, Master," said the pretended publican, "for here is a customer."

## CHAPTER XV.

### TOKENS OF RECOGNITION.

TAPIN at first thought that the new-comer was the Chevalier de Chanlay, but it was only a woman who wanted a pint of wine.

"What has happened to poor Monsieur Bourguignon?" she asked. "He has just been taken away in a coach."

"Alas!" said Tapin, "we were far from expecting it. He was standing there talking, and was suddenly seized with apoplexy."

"Gracious Heavens!"

"Alas!" said Tapin, raising his eyes toward heaven, "this proves that we are all mortal."

"But why did they take the little girl?"

"To attend to her father, — it is her duty."

"But the servant?"

"To cook for them, — it is his business."

"Ah, I could not understand it all; so I came to buy a pint of wine — though I did not want it — that I might find out."

"Well, now you know."

"Yes; but who are you?"

"I am Champagne, Bourguignon's cousin. I arrived by chance this morning; I brought him news of his family, and the sudden joy overcame him. Ask Grabigeon," continued Tapin, showing his assistant, who was finishing the omelet begun by the landlord's daughter.

"Oh, yes; everything passed exactly as Monsieur Champagne says," replied Grabigeon, wiping away a tear with the handle of his spoon.

"Poor Monsieur Bourguignon! Then you think that we should pray for him?"

"There is never any harm in praying," said Tapin, sententiously.

"Ah, stop a minute; give me good measure, at any rate."

Bourguignon would have groaned in spirit, could he have seen the wine that Tapin gave for her two sous.

"Well," said she, "I will go and tell the neighbors, who are very anxious, and I promise you my custom, Monsieur Champagne; indeed, if Monsieur Bourguignon were not your cousin, I would tell you what I think."

"Oh, tell me, neighbor; don't hesitate for that."

"Well, then, I perceive that he cheated me shamefully. What you have given me for two sous, he would hardly have given me for four."

"Think of that now!" said Tapin.

"Oh, Monsieur Champagne, you see it is very true that if there is no justice here below there is justice in heaven; and it is very providential that you are to continue his business."

"I believe so," said Tapin, in a low voice, "particularly for his customers." And he dismissed the woman just as the door opened, and a young man of lofty bearing entered, dressed in a blue cloak.

"Is this the hotel Muid d'Amour?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Tapin.

"Does Captain la Jonquière lodge here?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Is he within?"

"Yes; he has just returned."

"Tell him, if you please, that the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay is here."

Tapin bowed, offered the chevalier a chair, which he declined, and went into La Jonquière's room.

Gaston shook the snow from his boots and cloak, and proceeded leisurely to examine the pictures on the wall, without a suspicion that near him were three or four swords, which at a sign from the polite host would leave their sheaths to be plunged into his breast. Five minutes later Tapin returned, saying, "Captain la Jonquière waits for Monsieur de Chanlay."

Gaston proceeded to the room indicated by Tapin. In that room was a man whom the host presented to him as Captain la Jonquière; and without being a skilled physiognomist, Gaston perceived that this man was either accustomed to hide his play, or was a man of small aggressive force. Little, dry, red-nosed, gray-eyed, uneasy in his uniform, attached to a sword as long as he was, — such appeared the formidable captain whom Gaston had been recommended to treat with so much consideration.

"This man is ugly, and looks like a sexton," thought Gaston; then, as the stranger advanced to receive him, — "Have I the honor of speaking to Captain la Jonquière?" he asked.

"Himself," said Dubois; "and are you Monsieur le Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay?"

"I am, Monsieur."

"Have you the tokens agreed upon?" asked the false La Jonquière.

"Here is the half of the gold piece."

"And here the other," said Dubois.

They tried the two, which fitted exactly.

"And now," said Gaston, "the papers;" and he drew

from his pocket the strangely folded paper, on which was written the name of La Jonquière.

Dubois took from his pocket a similar paper, bearing Gaston's name; they were precisely alike.

"Excellent!" said Gaston; "and now the pocket-book."

They found that their pocket-books were precisely similar, and both, though new, contained a calendar for the year 1700, nineteen years previous. This was an extra precaution, adopted to avoid imitation. But Dubois had no need to imitate; he had found these tokens on La Jonquière's person, and with his diabolical sagacity and infernal instinct had understood how to use them.

"And now, Monsieur," said Gaston.

"Now we will talk of business; is not that your meaning, Chevalier?"

"Exactly; are we safe?"

"As though in a desert."

They seated themselves by a table, on which were a bottle of sherry and two glasses. Dubois filled one, and was about to fill the other, when Gaston made a sign with his hand that he would not drink.

"*Peste!*" thought Dubois, "he is slender and sober, — bad signs; Cæsar mistrusted thin men who did not drink, and of that sort were Brutus and Cassius."

Gaston seemed to be reflecting, and from time to time threw searching glances at Dubois, who sipped his wine leisurely, and sustained with unconcern Gaston's scrutiny.

"Captain," said Gaston, after a short silence, "when we undertake, as now, an affair in which we risk our heads, I think we should know each other, so that the past may vouch for the future. Montlouis, Talhouet, Du Couëdic, and Pontcalec have introduced me to you; you know my name and condition. I was brought up by a

brother who had reasons for personal hatred of the regent. This hatred I have inherited from him; therefore, three years ago, when the league was formed among the nobility in Bretagne, I entered the conspiracy. Now I have been chosen to come to Paris to receive the instructions of Baron de Valef, who has arrived from Spain; to transmit them to the Duc d'Olivarès, his Catholic Majesty's agent in Paris; and to assure myself of his assent."

"And what is Captain la Jonquière to do in all this?" asked Dubois, as though he were doubting the chevalier's identity.

"To present me to the Duc d'Olivarès. I arrived two hours ago; since then I have seen Monsieur de Valef, and now I come to you. Now you know my history as well as I do myself."

Dubois listened, and when Gaston had finished, "As to me, Chevalier," said he, throwing himself back indolently in his chair, "I must own my history is somewhat longer and more adventurous, however, if you wish to hear it, I will make it my duty to accede to your wishes."

"I have said, Captain," replied Gaston, bowing, "that situated as we are, it is of the first importance that we know each other intimately."

"Well," said Dubois, "as you know, I am called Captain la Jonquière. My father was, like myself, a soldier of fortune. This is a trade at which one gains in general a good deal of glory and very little money. My glorious father died, leaving me, for sole inheritance, his rapier and his uniform. I girded on the rapier, which was rather too long, and I wore the uniform, which was rather too large. From that time," said Dubois, calling the chevalier's attention to the looseness of his coat, which Gaston had already observed, — "from that time I contracted the

habit of always having plenty of room so as not to be hampered in my movements."

Gaston nodded, as though to express his approbation of this habit.

"Thanks to my good looks, I was received in the Royal-Italien, which was then recruiting in France. I held a distinguished post as sub-corporal, when — the day before the battle of Malplaquet — I had a slight quarrel with my sergeant about an order which he gave me with the end of his cane raised instead of lowered, as it should have been."

"Pardon me," said Gaston, "but I cannot see what difference that could make regarding the order he was giving."

"It made this difference, that as he lowered his cane it struck against my hat, which fell to the ground; the result of that awkwardness was a little duel, in which I passed my sabre through his body. Now, as I certainly should have been shot if I had waited to be arrested, I made off, and woke the next morning — devil take me if I know how it happened! — in Marlborough's army."

"That is to say, you deserted," said Gaston, smiling.

"I had Coriolanus and the great Condé for examples," said Dubois, "and this appeared to me to be sufficient to excuse me in the eyes of posterity. I assisted then, I must tell you as we are to hide nothing from each other, at the battle of Malplaquet; but instead of being on one side of the brook, I was on the other; and instead of having the village behind me, I faced it. I think this was a lucky exchange for your humble servant; the Royal-Italien left eight hundred men on the field of battle, my company was cut to pieces, and my own comrade and bed-fellow cut in two by a cannon-ball. The glory with which my late regiment covered itself so much delighted Marlborough that he made me an ensign on the field of

battle. With such a protector I ought to have done well; but his wife, Lady Marlborough, whom Heaven confound, having been awkward enough to spill a bowl of water over Queen Anne's dress, this great event changed the face of things in Europe. In the overthrow which resulted, I found myself without any other protector than my own merit, and the enemies I had gained thereby."

"And what did you do then?" asked Gaston, somewhat interested in the adventurous life of the pretended captain.

"What could I do? I was forced to enter the service of his Catholic Majesty, who, to his honor be it said, graciously acceded to my demand for a commission. In three years I was a captain; but out of our pay of thirty reals a day they kept back twenty, telling us what an honor it was for us to lend money to the King of Spain. As the security did not appear good in my eyes, I asked permission of my colonel to leave the service and return to my beautiful country, accompanied by a recommendation, in order that the Malplaquet affair might not be brought up against me. The colonel referred me to the Prince de Cellamare, who, recognizing in me a natural disposition to obey without discussion any orders given in a proper manner and accompanied by a certain music, employed me actively in the famous conspiracy which bears his name, when all at once the whole affair failed, as you know, through the double denunciation of La Fillon and a wretched writer called Buvat. But his Highness, wisely thinking that what is deferred is not lost, recommended me to his successor, to whom, I hope, my services may be useful, and whom I thank most heartily for procuring me the acquaintance of so accomplished a cavalier as yourself. Count on me then, Chevalier, as your most humble and obedient servant."

"I ask nothing of you, Captain," replied Gaston, "but to present me to the duke, the only person to whom my instructions permit me to speak openly, and to whom I am to deliver the Baron de Valef's despatches. I beg, therefore, that you will present me to his Excellency."

"This very day, Chevalier," said Dubois, who seemed to have decided on his course of action, — "in an hour if you like, in ten minutes if necessary."

"As soon as possible."

"Listen," said Dubois. "I was a little too quick when I said you should see his Excellency in an hour; in Paris one is never sure. Perhaps he does not know of your coming, and I may not find him at home."

"I understand that; I will have patience."

"Perhaps even I may be prevented from coming back for you."

"How so?"

"*Peste*, Chevalier; it is easy to see that this is your first visit to Paris."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that in Paris there are three distinct bodies of police, who all unite to torment those honest people who desire only to substitute what is not for what is: first, the regent's police, which is not much to be feared; secondly, that of Messire Voyer d'Argenson, — ugh! he has his days, when he is in a bad humor, after being ill received at the convent of the Madeleine du Tresnel; thirdly, there is Dubois's police, — ah! that is a different thing. Dubois is a great — "

"A great scoundrel!" cried Gaston. "You tell me nothing new; I was aware of it."

Dubois bowed, with his fatal, monkeyish smile.

"Well, to escape these three bodies of police?" said Gaston.

"One must be prudent, Chevalier."

"Instruct me, Captain; for you seem to know more about it than I, who am a provincial."

"Very well, — in the first place, we must not lodge in the same hotel."

"*Diable!*" said Gaston, who remembered the address given to Hélène; "that will annoy me. I had reasons for wishing to remain here."

"I will be the one to turn out then, Chevalier. Take one of my rooms, this one or the one above."

"I prefer this."

"You are right, — on the ground-floor, a window looking into one street, a secret door to the other. You have a quick eye; we shall make something of you."

"Let us return to our business."

"Right; where was I?"

"You said you might not be able to come back for me yourself."

"Yes; but in that case take care not to follow any one without sufficient tokens."

"By what tokens shall I recognize any one as coming from you?"

"First, he must have a letter from me."

"I do not know your writing."

"True; I will give you a specimen." And Dubois wrote the following lines:—

MONSIEUR LE CHEVALIER, — Follow without fear the man who brings this note; he is deputed by me to lead you to the house where the Duc d'Olivarès and Captain la Jonquière await you.

"Stay," said he, giving Gaston the note, "if any one comes in my name he will give you a similar letter."

"Is that enough?"

"That is never enough; besides the letter, he will show you the half-coin, and at the door of the house to which he conducts you, you will ask for the third token of recognition."

"Which will be —"

"The paper."

"It is well," said Gaston; "with these precautions, the Devil is in it if we make a mistake. Now, what am I to do?"

"Wait; you have no purpose to go out to-day?"

"No."

"Well, remain quiet in this hotel, where you will want for nothing. I will recommend you to the host."

"Thanks."

"My dear Monsieur Champagne," said Dubois to Tapin, opening the door, "the Chevalier de Chanlay takes my room; attend to him as you would to me." Then, closing it, "That fellow is worth his weight in gold, Tapin," said he, in a low voice, "do not lose sight of him for a moment; you will answer for him with your head."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### HIS EXCELLENCY THE DUC D'OLIVARÈS.

DUBOIS, on leaving the chevalier, congratulated himself on the chance which had again placed in his hands the future of the regent and of France. In crossing the hall he recognized L'Éveillé, and signed to him to follow. It was L'Éveillé who had undertaken to get the real La Jonquière out of the way. As they went out into the street Dubois inquired with interest what had become of the worthy captain, and learned that he had been bundled off to the prison of Vincennes, that he might not cross any of the government's manœuvres. At that period a sort of preventive system was in vogue, wonderfully convenient to the government ministers.

Being informed on this important point, Dubois pursued his way absorbed in thought. Only one half the affair was achieved, and that the easier half; it now remained to persuade the regent to take an active part in a stratagem he was sure to abhor. Dubois proceeded to ascertain where the regent was, and how occupied.

The prince was in his studio, finishing an etching made by the use of an acid prepared for him by Humbert, his chemist. The latter, at an adjoining table, was occupied in embalming an ibis, by the Egyptian method, which he professed to have recovered. A secretary was reading some letters to the regent.

All at once, to the regent's astonishment, — for this cabinet was his private retreat, — the door opened, and

an usher announced Captain la Jonquière. The regent turned. "La Jonquière?" said he; "what can that mean?" Humbert and the secretary stared at each other in astonishment that a stranger should be thus unceremoniously intruded on their privacy. A long, pointed head appeared at the open door.

The regent did not, at first, recognize Dubois in his disguise; but the pointed nose, which had not its match in the kingdom, revealed his identity. An expression of great amusement succeeded to the astonishment which the regent's features had at first displayed. "What! it is you, Abbé?" said his Highness, laughing. "And what is the meaning of this disguise?"

"It means that I have changed my skin, and from a fox have turned into a lion; and now Monsieur the Chemist and Monsieur the Secretary, do me the favor to take your bird and your letters elsewhere."

"Why so?" asked the regent.

"Because I have to confer with your Highness on important business."

"Go to the devil with your important business! The business hours are past; come to-morrow."

"Monseigneur," said Dubois, "do not force me to remain till to-morrow in this villanous disguise."

"Do what you please, but I have decided that the rest of this day shall be given to pleasure."

"Well, I come to propose a disguise to you also."

"A disguise! What do you mean, Dubois?" asked the regent, who thought Dubois was proposing one of his ordinary masquerades.

"Ah, it makes your mouth water, Monsieur Alain."

"Speak; what do you want to do?"

"First, send away your chemist and secretary."

"You still wish it?"

"Decidedly."

"Very well, then, since you insist —" And the regent signed to them to leave; they both went out. "And now," said he, "what is it?"

"I want to present to you, Monseigneur, a young man, a very delightful fellow, just arrived from Bretagne, and strongly recommended to me."

"His name?"

"The Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

"De Chanlay!" said the regent, searching his memory, "that name is not entirely unknown to me."

"Indeed?"

"No; it seems to me that I knew it long ago, but I cannot recall the circumstances. What is your protégé doing in Paris?"

"Monseigneur, I am unwilling to rob you of the surprise you will feel on making the discovery. He will tell you what he proposes to do in Paris."

"What! He will tell me?"

"Yes; that is to say, he will inform the Duc d'Olivarès, whom you are about to personate. Ah, my protégé is a discreet conspirator, and I have had some trouble to get at the truth of things. He was sent to Paris, to a certain La Jonquière, who was to present him to the Duc d'Olivarès. Do you understand now?"

"Not at all."

"Well, I have been Captain la Jonquière; but I cannot be both La Jonquière and his Excellency."

"So you reserve that rôle —"

"For you, Monseigneur."

"Thank you. So you expect me to assume a false name, that so I may surprise the secrets —"

"Of your enemies, Monseigneur," interrupted Dubois. "*Pardieu!* what a dreadful crime, and how it would

distress you, to change name and dress, — as if you had never before learned secrets by such means! Consider, then, Monseigneur, that, thanks to your adventurous character, our life has been a sort of continual masquerade. What the devil! Monseigneur, after being called Monsieur Alain and Maître Jean, you may well, I think, condescend to be called Duc d'Olivarès."

"I ask nothing better than a disguise for amusement; but — "

"But a disguise," continued Dubois, "to preserve the peace of France, to prevent traitors from overthrowing the kingdom, to prevent assassins from murdering you, — this is unworthy of you! I understand that. Ah, if it were only in pursuit of some little ironmongress in the Pont Neuf, or the pretty widow of the Rue St. Augustine, it might be worth your while!"

"Well, let us see," said the regent; "if I accede to your request, as usual, what will be the result?"

"Probably, that you will own that I am no visionary, and that you will allow others to watch over you, since you will not watch over yourself."

"But, once for all, if the thing turns out not worth the trouble, shall I be freed from your worrying?"

"I promise you, on my honor."

"Abbé, if you have no objection, I should prefer another oath."

"Oh, Monseigneur, you are too hard; one swears by what he can."

"It is written that this rascal will have the last word."

"Monseigneur consents?"

"Still that piece of folly?"

"*Peste!* You will see if it is folly."

"I believe you make plots to frighten me."

"Then they are well made; you will see that."

"You are pleased with this plot?"

"I find it very agreeable."

"If I am not frightened, look to yourself."

"Monseigneur exacts too much."

"You flatter me; you are not sure of your conspiracy, Dubois."

"I swear to you, Monseigneur, that you will be moved, and will be glad to speak with his Excellency's tongue." And Dubois went out before the regent had time to withdraw his consent.

Five minutes after, a courier entered the antechamber, and gave a letter to a page, who brought it to the regent, who, on looking at the address, made a movement of surprise. "Madame Desroches!" said he, "there is something new, then," and hurriedly breaking the seal, he read as follows:—

MONSEIGNEUR, — The young lady you left in my charge does not appear to be in safety here.

"Bah!" cried the regent, and then read on:—

The residence in the town, which your Highness feared for her, would be a hundred times better than isolation; and I do not feel strong enough to defend her as I would wish, and as I ought.

"Ah," said the regent, "it seems something is the matter."

A young man, who had written to Mademoiselle Hélène shortly before your arrival yesterday, presented himself this morning at the pavilion; I wished to refuse him admittance, Mademoiselle so peremptorily ordered me to admit him, retire, that in her look and tone I recognized the blood commands.

"Yes, yes," said the regent, smiling in spite of himself, "she is, indeed, my daughter; but who can this young man be? Some coxcomb she has seen in the convent parlor. If that fool of a Desroches had only told me his name!" Then he read on:—

I believe, Monseigneur, that this young man and Mademoiselle have met before. I did not think it wrong to listen, for your Highness's service, and in spite of the double door I once heard him say, "To see you as formerly." Will your Royal Highness secure me against this danger, and send me a written order which I can use to shelter myself from the anger of Mademoiselle?

"*Diable!*" exclaimed the regent, "this complicates the situation. A love affair already! But, no; it is impossible,— brought up in the only convent in France, perhaps, where men never get beyond the parlor. No; it is some foolish fear of Madame Desroches; but let us see what else she writes."

P. S. I have just been to the Hotel Tigre Royal for information. The young man arrived yesterday evening at seven o'clock, just three quarters of an hour before Mademoiselle; he came by the Bretagne road, that is the road by which she arrived. He travels under the name of Monsieur de Livry.

"Oh!" said the regent, "that looks more dangerous; it looks like a concerted plan. *Pardieu!* Dubois would laugh if he knew this; how he would turn on me my dissertations about the purity of young girls outside the atmosphere of Paris and Versailles. It is to be hoped he knows nothing of it, in spite of his police. Holloa, page!"

The page who had brought the letter entered.

"Where is the messenger from Rambouillet?"

"He is waiting for an answer."

"Give him this, and tell him to start at once."

As to Dubois, while preparing the interview between Gaston and the pretended duke, he made the following calculation: "I hold the regent both by himself and his daughter. This intrigue of hers is either serious or not. If it be not, I can break it up while exaggerating its importance; if it be serious, I have the merit of having discovered it. But I must not strike both blows at once. First, I must save the duke, then his daughter, and there will be two rewards. Let me see, is that the best course to take? Yes, — the duke first. If a young girl falls, no one suffers; if a man falls, a kingdom is lost. Let us begin with the duke." And having taken that resolution, Dubois despatched a courier to Monsieur de Montaran at Nantes. Monsieur de Montaran was, as we have said, the former governor of Bretagne.

As to Gaston, his plan was fixed. Ashamed of being associated with a man like La Jonquière, he congratulated himself that he was now to communicate with the chief of the enterprise, and resolved, if he also appeared base and venial, to return and take counsel with his friends at Nantes. As to Hélène, he had no hesitation; he knew her courage and her love, and that she would die rather than have to blush before her dearest friend. He saw with joy that the happiness of finding a father did not lead her to forget the past. But still he had his fears as to this mysterious paternity; even a king would own such a daughter, were there not some disgraceful obstacle.

Gaston dressed himself carefully; there is a coquetry in danger as well as in pleasure, and he embellished his
th with every advantage of costume.

ıe regent, by Dubois's advice, dressed in black velvet,

and half hid his face in an immense cravat of Mechlin lace.

The interview was to take place in a house belonging to the regent, in the Faubourg St. Germain; he arrived there at five o'clock, as night was falling.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MONSEIGNEUR, WE ARE BRETONS.

Gaston remained in the room on the ground-floor, and dressed himself carefully, as we have said, while Tapin continued his apprenticeship. By the evening he knew how to measure a pint as well as his predecessor, and even better; for he reflected that in the compensation which would be given to Bourguignon, waste would be considered, and that therefore the less waste the better would be his own profits. So the morning's customer on her return got badly served, and went off disgusted.

When his toilet was finished, Gaston began to inspect La Jonquière's library, and found it composed of three sets of books,— theatrical books, obscene books, and arithmetical books. While he was thus engaged a man entered, introduced by Tapin, who went out directly and left him alone with Gaston. The man announced that Captain la Jonquière, not being able to return, had sent him in his stead. Gaston, demanding proof, the man showed a letter in the same terms and the same writing as the specimen Gaston had received, and then the half-coin, after which Gaston made no difficulty as to following him, and both got into a carefully closed carriage. They crossed the Pont Neuf, and in the Rue du Bac stopped at the courtyard of a pavilion; then the man drew from his pocket the paper bearing the chevalier's name as the third token of recognition.

Gaston and his companion alighted, ascended the four steps of the doorway, and entered a large circular corridor surrounding the pavilion. Gaston looked round and saw that his guide had disappeared, and that he was alone. His heart beat quickly. He was about to face, not a tool, but the master and originator of the whole plot, the representative of a king, — himself at the same time representing France. He was about to speak face to face with Spain, and to propose to a foreigner a war against his own country; he was to play a kingdom against a kingdom.

A bell sounded within. Gaston almost trembled. He looked in a glass and saw that he was pale; a thousand new ideas assailed him. The door opened, and La Jonquière appeared.

"Still he!" murmured Gaston, with disgust.

But the captain, notwithstanding his practised and quick discernment, did not seem to notice the cloud which had settled on the chevalier's brow. "Come, Chevalier," said he, "we are expected."

Gaston, stimulated by the importance of the enterprise he had undertaken, advanced with a firm step. They found a man seated in an armchair, his back turned to the door. A single light, placed on a table and covered with a shade, lighted only the lower part of his body; his head and shoulders were in shadow.

Gaston thought the face noble, and understood at once that this was a man of worth, and no La Jonquière. The mouth was benevolent, and the eyes large, bold, and firm, like those of a king or a bird of prey; deep thought was written on his brow, prudence and some degree of firmness in the lower part of the face, — all this, however, in the half-darkness, and in spite of the Mechlin cravat.

"At least this is an eagle," Gaston said to himself; "the other was but a raven, or rather a vulture."

Captain la Jonquière remained standing, at a respectful distance, and affected a military attitude. The unknown, after looking steadily at Gaston, who bowed in silence, with the same intentness of observation which Gaston had bestowed on him, rose from his chair, and bowing in return, with dignity, went and leaned against the mantelpiece.

"Monsieur is the person of whom I spoke to your Excellency," said La Jonquière, — "Monsieur le Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

The unknown again bowed slightly, but made no answer.

"*Mordieu!*" whispered Dubois, in his ear, "if you do not speak he will not say anything."

"Monsieur comes from Bretagne, I believe," said the duke, coldly.

"Yes, Monsieur; but will your Excellency pardon me? Captain la Jonquière has told my name, but I have not yet the honor of knowing yours. Excuse my rudeness, Monseigneur; it is not I who speak, it is my province, which sends me."

"You are right, Monsieur," said La Jonquière, quickly, taking from a portfolio on the table a paper, at the bottom of which was a large signature with the seal of the King of Spain. "Here is the name," said he.

"Duc d'Olivarès," read Gaston. Then turning toward the person thus presented, without remarking the slight color which came to his face, he bowed respectfully.

"And now, Monsieur," said the unknown, "you will not, I presume, hesitate to speak."

"I thought I had first to listen," said Gaston, still on the defensive.

"True; but, remember, it is a dialogue; each one speaks in turn."

"Monseigneur, you do me too much honor, and I will set the example of confidence."

"I listen, Monsieur."

"Monseigneur, the states of Bretagne —"

"The malcontents of Bretagne," interrupted the regent, smiling, in spite of a sign from Dubois.

"The malcontents are so numerous," replied Gaston, "that they may be considered the representatives of the province. However, I will employ the word your Excellency prefers; the malcontents of Bretagne have sent me to you, Monseigneur, to learn the intentions of Spain in this affair."

"First, let us learn those of Bretagne."

"Monseigneur, Spain may count on us; we pledge our word, and Breton loyalty is proverbial."

"But what do you promise?"

"To second the efforts of the French nobility."

"But are you not French?"

"Monseigneur, we are Bretons. Bretagne, re-united to France by a treaty, must regard herself as disunited from the moment that France no longer respects the rights reserved to her by that treaty."

"Yes, I know, — the old story of Anne de Bretagne's contract. It is a long time since that contract was signed, Monsieur."

The pretended La Jonquière nudged the regent violently.

"What matter," said Gaston, "if each one of us has it by heart?"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MONSIEUR ANDRÉ.

"You said that the Breton nobility were ready to second the French nobility; now, what do the French nobility want?"

"They desire, in case of his Majesty's death, to place the King of Spain on the throne of France, as sole heir of Louis XIV."

"Very good, very good!" said La Jonquière, taking snuff with an air of extreme satisfaction.

"But," said the regent, "the king is not dead, although you speak almost as if he were."

"The Grand Dauphin, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne and their children died unexpectedly."

The regent turned pale with anger; Dubois coughed. "Then they reckon on the king's death?" asked the duke.

"Generally, Monseigneur."

"Then that explains how the King of Spain hopes, in spite of the renunciation of his rights, to mount the throne of France. But among the people attached to the regency he may meet with some opposition."

The pretended Spaniard involuntarily emphasized these words.

"Monseigneur," replied the chevalier, "this case also has been foreseen."

"Ah!" said Dubois, "this has been foreseen. Very good! Did not I tell you, Monseigneur, that the Bretons were valuable to us. Continue, Monsieur, continue."

In spite of this invitation, Gaston was silent.

"Well, Monsieur," said the pretended duke, interested in spite of himself, "you see that I am listening."

"This secret is not mine, Monseigneur."

"Then," said the duke, "I have not the confidence of your chiefs?"

"On the contrary, you alone have it."

"I understand, Monsieur; but the captain is my friend, and I answer for him as for myself."

"My instructions are, Monseigneur, to speak to you alone."

"But, I tell you, I answer for the captain."

"In that case," said Gaston, bowing, "I have no more to say."

"You hear, Captain," said the regent; "have the kindness to leave us alone."

"Yes, Monseigneur; I have but two words to say to you."

Gaston drew back.

"Monseigneur," whispered Dubois, "press him hard, — get out the whole affair; you will never have such another chance. What do you think of our Breton?"

"A noble fellow, — eyes full of intelligence and a fine head."

"They will cut it off the more easily," muttered Dubois, rubbing his nose.

"What do you say?"

"Nothing, Monseigneur; I am exactly of your opinion. Monsieur de Chanlay, your humble servant; another person in my place might be angry that you would not speak before him, but I am not proud, and provided that all things turn out as I expect, I do not care for the means."

Chanlay bowed slightly.

"Monsieur," said the regent, when Dubois had closed the door, "we are alone, and I am listening. Speak, — you understand my impatience?"

"Yes, Monseigneur. You are doubtless surprised that you have not yet received from Spain a certain despatch which you were to send to Cardinal Olocroni?"

"True, Monsieur," said the regent, dissembling with difficulty.

"I will explain the delay. The messenger who should have brought this despatch fell ill, and has not left Madrid. The Baron de Valef, my friend, who was in Spain, offered himself; and after three or four days' hesitation, at length — as he was a man already tried in Cellamare's conspiracy — they trusted him."

"In fact," said the regent, "the Baron de Valef narrowly escaped Dubois' emissaries; it needed some courage to renew such a work. I know that when the regent saw Madame du Maine and Cellamare arrested, Richelieu, Polignac, Malezieux, and Mademoiselle de Launay in the Bastille, and that wretched Lagrange-Chancel at Ste. Marguerite, he thought all was finished."

"You see he was mistaken, Monseigneur."

"But do not these Breton conspirators fear that in thus rising they may sacrifice the heads of the Paris conspirators whom the regent has in his power?"

"Quite the contrary, Monseigneur; they expect to save them, or they will count it a glory to die with them."

"How save them?"

"Let us return to the despatch, if you please, Monseigneur; here it is."

The regent took the paper, but seeing the address to his Excellency the Duc d'Olivarès, laid it on the table unopened. Strange inconsistency! This man sometimes

opened two hundred letters in a day through his spies in the postal service. It is true that then he dealt with a Thorey or a Dubois, and not with a Chevalier de Chanlay.

"Well, Monseigneur?" said Gaston, not at all comprehending the duke's hesitation.

"You know, doubtless, what this despatch contains, Monsieur?"

"Not word for word, perhaps; but I know what was arranged."

"Well, tell me. I shall be glad to know how far you are admitted into the secrets of the Spanish cabinet."

"When the regent is got rid of," said Gaston, without noticing the slight start which his interlocutor gave at these words, "the Duc du Maine will be provisionally recognized in his place. The Duc du Maine will at once break the treaty of the quadruple alliance signed by that scoundrel Dubois."

"I wish La Jonquière had been here to hear you speak thus; it would have pleased him. Go on, Monsieur."

"The pretender will start with a fleet for the English shore; Prussia, Sweden, and Russia will then be engaged with Holland; the empire will profit by this war to retake Naples and Sicily, to which it lays claim through the house of Suabia; the Grand Duchy of Tuscany will be assured to the second son of the King of Spain; the Catholic Netherlands will be reunited to France, Sardinia given to the Duke of Savoy, and Commachio to the Pope. France will be the soul of the great league of the South against the North, and if Louis XV. dies, Philip V. will be crowned king of half the world."

"Yes, I know all that," said the regent, "and this is Cellamare's conspiracy renewed. But you used a phrase I do not understand."

"Which, Monseigneur?"

"You said, 'when the regent is got rid of.' How is he to be got rid of?"

"The old plan was, as you know, to carry him off to the prison of Saragossa, or the fortress of Toledo."

"Yes; and the plan failed through the duke's watchfulness."

"It was impracticable, — a thousand obstacles opposed it. How was it possible to take such a prisoner across France?"

"It would have been difficult," said the duke; "I never understood the adoption of such a plan. I am glad to find it modified."

"Monseigneur, it would be possible to seduce guards, to escape from a prison or a fortress, to return to France, retake a lost power, and punish those who had executed this abduction. Philip V. and Alberoni have nothing to fear; his Excellency the Duc d'Olivarès regains the frontier in safety; and while half the conspirators escape, the other half pay for all."

"However — "

"Monseigneur, we have the example of the last conspiracy before our eyes, and you yourself have just named those who are in the Bastille."

"What you say is most logical," replied the duke.

"While, on the contrary, in getting rid of the regent — " continued the chevalier.

"Yes; you will prevent his return. It is possible to return from a prison, but not from a tomb, — that is what you would say?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied Gaston, with a somewhat tremulous voice.

"Now I understand your mission. You come to Paris to make away with the regent?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"By killing him?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"And it is you, Monsieur," continued the regent, looking earnestly at the young man, "who have offered yourself for that bloody mission?"

"No, Monseigneur; never of my own accord could I have chosen the rôle of an assassin."

"What, then, has constrained you to adopt that rôle?"

"Fatality, Monseigneur."

"Explain yourself."

"We were five Breton gentlemen, forming a small party or league in the midst of the general association, and it was agreed that the majority of us should decide on our plans."

"I understand, and the majority decided that the regent should be assassinated."

"Yes, Monseigneur; four were for assassination, and one against it."

"And that one?"

"Though I may lose your Excellency's confidence, I must own that I was that one."

"But then, Monsieur, how happens it that you are to accomplish a design you disapprove?"

"It was left to chance to decide who should strike the blow."

"And the lot?"

"Fell on me, Monseigneur."

"Why did you not refuse?"

"The ballot was without names; no one knew my vote. I should have been taken for a coward."

"And you came to Paris —"

"To perform the task imposed on me."

"Reckoning on me?"

"As on an enemy of the regent, for aid in accomplishing an enterprise which not only profoundly concerns the interests of Spain, but which will save our friends in the Bastille."

"Do you think they are in so great danger?"

"Death hovers over them; the regent has proofs, and has said of Monsieur de Richelieu that if he had four heads he has wherewith to condemn them all."

"He said that in a moment of passion."

"What, Monseigneur, you defend the duke? You tremble when a man devotes himself to save, not only his accomplices, but two kingdoms, — you hesitate to accept that devotion?"

"If you fail in this enterprise?"

"Everything has its good and evil side, Monseigneur; if one has not the happiness of saving his country, there remains the honor of martyrdom to its cause."

"But remember, in facilitating your access to the regent, I become your accomplice."

"Does that frighten you, Monseigneur?"

"Certainly; for you, being arrested —"

"Well — I, being arrested —"

"They may force from you, by means of tortures, the names of those —"

Gaston interrupted the prince with a gesture and smile of supreme disdain. "You are a foreigner and a Spaniard, Monseigneur," said he, "and do not know what a French gentleman is; therefore I pardon you."

"Then I may reckon on your silence?"

"Pontcalec, Du Couëdic, Talhouet, and Montlouis doubted me for an instant, and have since apologized to me for doing so."

"Well, Monsieur, I will think seriously of what you have said; but in your place —"

"In my place?"

"I would renounce this enterprise."

"I wish I had never entered into it, Monseigneur, I own; for since I did so a great change has taken place in my life. But I am in it and must go through with it."

"Even if I refuse to second you?"

"The Breton committee have provided for even that emergency."

"And decided —"

"To do without you."

"Then your resolution —"

"Is irrevocable."

"I have said all I had to say," replied the regent, "since you are determined to pursue your undertaking."

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, "you seem to wish to retire."

"Have you anything more to say to me?"

"Not to-day; but to-morrow, or the day after —"

"You have the captain as go-between; when he gives me notice I will receive you with pleasure."

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, firmly, and with a noble air, "let me speak freely. We should have no go-between; you and I — so evidently separated by rank and station — are equal before the scaffold which threatens us. I have even a superiority over you, since I run the greater danger. However, you are now, Monseigneur, a conspirator, like the Chevalier de Chanlay, with this difference, — that you have the right, being the chief, to see his head fall before yours. Let me, then, treat as an equal with your Excellency, and see you when it is necessary."

The regent thought for a moment. "Very well," said he. "This house is not my residence; you understand I do not receive many at my house since war became

imminent. My position in France is precarious and delicate. Cellamare is in prison at Blois; I am only a sort of consul, — good as a hostage. I cannot use too many precautions." The regent lied with a painful effort. "Write, then, *poste restante* to Monsieur André. You must name the time at which you wish to see me, and I will be here."

"Shall I write by mail?" asked Gaston.

"Yes; it is only a delay of three hours. At every collection of the mail some one will be on the lookout for your letter, and will bring it directly to me; three hours after, you can come here."

"Your Excellency forgets," said Gaston, laughing, "that I do not know where I am, in what street, at what number. I came by night. Stay, let us do better than that. You asked for time to reflect; take till to-morrow morning, and at eleven o'clock send for me. We must arrange a plan beforehand, that it may not fail like those plans where a carriage sent to the wrong place or a shower of rain disconcerts everything."

"That is a good idea," said the regent; "to-morrow, then, at eleven o'clock, you shall be sent for, and we will then have no secrets from each other."

Gaston bowed and retired. In the antechamber he found the guide who had brought him; but he noticed that in leaving they crossed a garden which they had not passed through on entering, and went out by a different door. At this door the carriage waited, which, as soon as he had taken his place in it, started off rapidly toward the Rue des Bourdonnais.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE FAUBOURG ST. ANTOINE.

No more illusion for the chevalier. In a day or two he might be called to his task, — and what a task!

The Spanish envoy had deeply impressed Gaston; there was about him an air of greatness which surprised him. A strange reminiscence passed across his mind; there was, between the Spaniard's forehead and eyes and those of Hélène, one of those vague and distant likenesses which seem almost like the incoherence of a dream. Gaston, without knowing why, associated these two faces in his memory, and could not separate them. As he was about to lie down, worn out with fatigue, a horse's feet sounded in the street, the hotel door opened, and Gaston heard an animated conversation; but soon the door was closed, the noise ceased, and he slept as a man sleeps at five-and-twenty, even if he be in love and a conspirator.

However, Gaston had not been mistaken; a horse had arrived, and a conversation had taken place. A peasant from Rambouillet had brought in haste a note from a young and pretty woman to the Chevalier de Chanlay, Hotel Muid d'Amour. We can imagine who the young and pretty woman was.

Tapin took the letter, looked at it, then, taking off his apron, left the charge of the hotel to one of his servants, and went off to Dubois.

"Oh," exclaimed the latter, "let us see; a letter!"

He unsealed it skilfully by aid of steam, and on reading the letter and noticing the signature, he broke out in unrestrained rejoicing. "Good! excellent!" said he. "Let them alone to go their own way; we hold the reins, and can stop them when we like." Then turning to Tapin he gave him the letter, which he had resealed. "Here," said he, "deliver the letter."

"When?" asked Tapin.

"At once."

Tapin stepped toward the door.

"No, stop," said Dubois; "to-morrow morning will be soon enough."

"Now," said Tapin, "may I make an observation?"

"Speak."

"As Monseigneur's agent, I gain three crowns a day."

"Well, is that not enough, you scoundrel?"

"It was enough as agent, — I do not complain of that; but it is not enough as wine-merchant. Oh, the horrid trade!"

"Drink and amuse yourself, animal!"

"Now that I sell wine I hate it."

"Because you see how it is made. But drink champagne, muscat, anything; Bourguignon pays. By the way, he has had a real attack; so your lie was only an affair of chronology."

"Really, Monseigneur?"

"Yes; you frightened him into it. Do you want to inherit his goods?"

"No, no; the trade is not amusing."

"Well, I will add three crowns a day to your pay while you are there, and I will give the shop to your eldest daughter as a dowry. Bring me such letters often, and you shall be welcome."

Tapin returned to the hotel, but waited for the morn-

ing to deliver the letter. At six o'clock, hearing Gaston moving, he entered, and gave him the note. On recognizing the handwriting Gaston turned red and pale at the same time; and as he read the letter his paleness increased. Tapin made a pretence of putting things in order, and watched Gaston stealthily. In fact, the letter contained serious intelligence; it was as follows: —

My Beloved, — I think of your advice, and that perhaps you were right. At any rate, I am afraid. A carriage has just arrived, and Madame Desroches orders departure. I have tried to resist, and they shut me up in my room. Fortunately, a peasant passed by to water his horse; I have given him two louis, and he promises to take you this note. I hear the last preparations; in two hours we leave for Paris. On my arrival I will acquaint you with my address if I have to jump out of the window and bring it. Be assured the woman who loves you will remain worthy of herself and you.

"Ah, Hélène!" cried Gaston; "I was not deceived. Eight o'clock in the evening, — *mon Dieu!* she has already started; she has arrived, even! Monsieur Bourguignon, why was not this letter brought to me at once?"

"Your Excellency was asleep; we waited till you should awake," replied Tapin, with exquisite politeness.

There was no reply to be made to a man of so courteous bearing. Besides, Gaston reflected that if he gave way to excitement he might betray his secret. He therefore restrained his wrath; but the idea came to him to go and watch at the barrier, as Hélène might not have arrived. He dressed quickly, and set out, after saying to Tapin, "If Captain la Jonquière comes here, say I shall be back at nine."

Gaston arrived at the barrier perspiring; he had not found a carriage and had gone all the way on foot. While he there waits for Hélène in vain, — for she entered Paris

at two o'clock in the morning, — let us take a backward look.

We saw the regent receive Madame Desroches's letter and send a reply. Indeed, it was necessary to take prompt measures and remove Hélène at once from the reach of this Monsieur de Livry.

But who could he be? Dubois alone could tell. So when Dubois appeared, "Dubois," said the regent, "who is Monsieur de Livry of Nantes?"

Dubois rubbed his nose, for he saw the aim of the question.

"Livry — Livry," said he; "wait a moment!"

"Yes, Livry."

"Who knows such a name? Send for Monsieur d'Hozier."

"Idiot!"

"But, Monseigneur, I do not study genealogies. I am an unworthy plebeian."

"A truce to this folly!"

"*Diable!* it seems Monseigneur is in earnest about these Livrys. Are you going to give the order to one of them? Because, in that case, I will try and find for him a noble origin."

"Go to the devil, and send me Nocé."

Dubois smiled, and went out. About ten minutes later Nocé appeared. He was a man about forty years old, distinguished-looking, tall, handsome, cold, and witty, — one of the regent's most faithful and intimate friends.

"Monseigneur sent for me," he said.

"Ah, Nocé, good-day."

"Can I serve your Royal Highness in anything?"

"Yes; lend me your house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, but empty, and carefully arranged. I will put my own people in it."

"Is it to be for — "

"For a prude, Nocé."

"The houses in the faubourg have a bad name, Monseigneur."

"The person for whom I require it does not know that; but remember, absolute silence, Nocé, and give me the keys."

"A quarter of an hour, Monseigneur, and you shall have them."

"Adieu, Nocé, your hand; no spying, no curiosity, I beg."

"Monseigneur, I am going to hunt, and shall return only when recalled by your Royal Highness."

"Thanks; adieu till to-morrow."

The regent sat down and wrote to Madame Desroches, sending a carriage with an order to bring Hélène, after reading her the enclosed letter without showing it to her. The letter was as follows:—

MY DAUGHTER, — On reflection, I wish to have you near me. Therefore follow Madame Desroches without loss of time. On your arrival at Paris, you shall hear from me.

Your affectionate father.

Hélène resisted, prayed, wept, but was forced to obey. She profited by a moment of solitude to write to Gaston, as we have seen. Then she left this dwelling which had become dear to her, for here she had found her father and received her lover.

As to Gaston, he waited vainly at the barrier, till, giving up all hope, he returned to the hotel. As he crossed the garden of the Tuileries, eight o'clock struck.

At that moment Dubois entered the regent's bedchamber with a portfolio under his arm, and a triumphant smile on his face.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE ARTIST AND THE POLITICIAN.

"Ah! it is you, Dubois," exclaimed the regent, as his minister entered.

"Yes, Monseigneur," said Dubois, taking out some papers. "Well, what do you say to our Bretons now?"

"What papers are those?" asked the regent, who in spite of the preceding day's conversation, or perhaps because of it, felt a secret sympathy with De Chanlay.

"Oh, nothing at all; first, a little report of what took place yesterday evening between Monsieur de Chanlay and his Excellency the Duc d'Olivarès."

"You listened, then?" said the regent.

"*Pardieu*, Monseigneur, what did you expect that I should do?"

"And you heard?"

"All. What do you think of his Catholic Majesty's pretensions?"

"I think that perhaps they use his name without his consent."

"And Cardinal Alberoni? *Tudieu*, Monseigneur, how nicely they manage Europe! — the pretender in England; Prussia, Sweden, and Russia tearing Holland to pieces; the empire recovering Sicily and Naples; the Grand Duchy of Tuscany for the son of Philip V.; Sardinia for the King of Savoy; Commachio for the Pope; France for Spain, — really, this plan is somewhat grand, to emanate from the brain of a bell-ringer."

"Those projects are all smoke," said the duke, — "mere dreams."

"And the Breton league, —is that all smoke?"

"I am forced to own that that really exists."

"And the dagger of our conspirator, — is that a dream?"

"No; it even appeared to me likely to be vigorously handled."

"*Peste!* Monseigneur, you complained in the other plot that you found none but rose-water conspirators. Well, this time I hope you are better pleased. These fellows strike hard."

"Do you know," said the regent, thoughtfully, "that the Chevalier de Chanlay is of an energetic and vigorous nature?"

"Ah, the next thing will be, you will conceive a great admiration for this fellow. I know, Monseigneur, that you are capable of it."

"How is it that a prince always finds such natures among his enemies, and not among his friends?"

"Because, Monseigneur, hatred is a passion, and devotion often only a weakness; but if you will descend from the height of philosophy and deign to a simple act, namely, to give me two signatures —"

"Signatures to what?" asked the regent.

"First, there is a captain to be made a major."

"Captain la Jonquière?"

"Oh, no! as to him, we'll hang him when we have done with him; but meanwhile we must treat him with care."

"Who, then, is this captain?"

"A brave officer whom Monseigneur, eight days, or rather eight nights ago, met in a house in the Rue St. Honoré."

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, I see I must aid your memory a little, Monseigneur, since you have such a bad one."

"Speak, one can never get at the truth with you."

"In two words, eight nights ago you went out, disguised as a musketeer, through the little door in the Rue de Richelieu, accompanied by Nocé and Simiane."

"It is true; what happened in the Rue St. Honoré?"

"Do you wish to know, Monseigneur?"

"I do."

"I can refuse nothing to your Highness."

"Speak, then."

"You supped at that house in the Rue St. Honoré, Monseigneur."

"Still with Nocé and Simiane?"

"No, Monseigneur; tête-à-tête. Nocé and Simiane supped too, but separately. You supped, then, and were at table, when a brave officer, who probably mistook the door, knocked so obstinately at yours that you became impatient, and going out, you handled somewhat roughly the unfortunate who disturbed you. But he, who it seems was not of a patient disposition, took out his sword; whereupon, you Monseigneur, who never look twice before committing a folly, drew your rapier and tried your skill with the officer."

"And the result?" asked the regent.

"Was, that you got a scratch on the shoulder, in return for which you bestowed on your adversary a sword-thrust in the breast."

"But it was not dangerous?" asked the regent, anxiously.

"No; fortunately the blade glided along the ribs."

"So much the better."

"But that is not all."

"What more?"

"It appears that you owed the officer a special grudge."

"I? I had never seen him."

"Princes strike from a distance."

"What do you mean?"

"This officer had been a captain for eight years, when on your Highness's coming into power he was dismissed."

"Then I suppose he deserved it."

"Ah, Monseigneur, you would make us out as infallible as the Pope!"

"He must have committed some cowardly act."

"He is one of the bravest officers in the service."

"Some infamous act then?"

"He is the most honest fellow breathing."

"Then this is an injustice to be repaired."

"Exactly; and that is why I prepared this major's brevet."

"Give it to me, Dubois; you have some good in you sometimes."

A diabolical smile passed over Dubois' face, and at that moment he drew from his portfolio a second paper. The regent watched him uneasily. "What is that paper?" he asked.

"Monseigneur, you have repaired an act of injustice, now do an act of justice."

"The order to arrest the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay, and place him in the Bastille!" cried the regent. "Ah! I see now why you bribed me with a good action; but stay, this requires reflection."

"Do you think I propose to you an abuse of power, Monseigneur?" asked Dubois, laughing.

"No; but yet —"

"Monseigneur," continued Dubois, "when we have in our hands the government of a kingdom, the thing most necessary is, to govern."

"But it seems to me that I am the master."

"To reward, yes; but on condition of punishing. The balance of justice is destroyed, Monseigneur, if an eternal and blind mercy weighs down one of the scales. To act as you always wish, and often do, is not good, but weak. What is the reward of virtue, if you do not punish vice?"

"Then," said the regent, the more impatiently that he felt he was defending a bad though generous cause, "if you wished me to be severe, you should not have brought about an interview between me and this young man; you should not have given me the opportunity of appreciating his worth, but have allowed me to suppose him a common conspirator."

"Yes; and now, because he presented himself to your Highness under a romantic guise, your artistic imagination runs away with you. *Diable!* Monseigneur, there is a time for everything; so give yourself to chemistry with Humbert, to engraving with Audran, to music with Lafare, to love with the whole world, — but with me, give yourself to politics."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the regent, "is it worth while to defend a life, watched, tortured, calumniated as mine is?"

"But it is not your life you are defending, Monseigneur; consider, among all these calumnies which pursue you, — and against which Heaven knows you should be steeled by this time, — your most bitter enemies have never accused you of cowardice. As to your life, at Steinkirk, at Nerwinden, and at Lerida, you proved at what rate you valued it. *Pardieu!* if you were merely a private gentleman, a minister, or even a prince of the blood, and were assassinated, a man's heart would cease to beat, and that would be all. But, wrongly or rightly, you coveted a place among the powerful ones of the world; to that end

you broke the will of Louis XIV.; you drove the bastards from the throne whereon they had already placed their feet; you made yourself regent of France, — that is to say, the key-stone of the arch of the world. If you die, it is not a man who falls; it is the pillar supporting the European edifice, which gives way; thus our four years of watchfulness and struggles would be lost, and everything around would be shaken. Look at England, — the Chevalier de Saint-George will renew the mad enterprises of the pretender; look at Holland, — Russia, Sweden, and Prussia will hunt her to the death; look at Austria, — her two-headed eagle will seize Venice and Milan, as an indemnification for the loss of Spain; cast your eyes on France, — no longer France, but the vassal of Philip V.; look, finally, at Louis XV., the last descendant of the greatest monarch that ever gave light to the world, and the child whom by watchfulness and care we have saved from the fate of his father, his mother, and his uncles, to place him safe and sound on the throne of his ancestors, — this child falls back again into the hands of those whom an adulterous law boldly calls to succeed him. Thus on all sides murder, desolation, ruin, civil and foreign wars. And why? Because it pleases Monsieur Philippe d'Orléans to think himself still major of the king's troops, or commandant of the army in Spain, and to forget that he ceased to be so from the moment he became regent of France."

"You insist upon it, then?" said the regent, taking a pen.

"Stay, Monseigneur," said Dubois, "it shall not be said that in an affair of this importance you gave way to my importunity. I have said what I had to say; now I withdraw. Do as you please. I leave you the paper; I am going to give some orders, and in a quarter of an hour

I will return for it." And Dubois, this time master of the situation, saluted the regent and went out.

Left alone, the regent fell into a profound revery. This whole affair, so sombre and so tenacious of life, this remnant of the former conspiracy, filled the duke's mind with gloomy thoughts. He had braved death in battle, had laughed at abductions meditated by the Spaniards and by the bastards of Louis XIV.; but this time a secret horror oppressed him, which he could not understand. He felt an involuntary admiration for the young man whose poniard was raised against him; at certain moments he hated him, at others he excused, and almost loved him. Dubois, crouching over this conspiracy like an infernal ape over some dying prey, and piercing with his ravenous claws to its very heart, seemed to him to possess a sublime intelligence and power; he felt that he, ordinarily so courageous, should have defended his life feebly in this instance, and his eyes involuntarily sought the paper.

"Yes," he murmured, "Dubois is right; my life is no longer my own: yesterday my mother also told me the same thing. Who knows what would happen throughout the world if I were to fall? That which happened at the death of my ancestor Henri IV., perchance. After having reconquered his kingdom step by step, he was about — thanks to ten years of peace, economy, and prosperity — to add Alsace, Lorraine, and perhaps Flanders to France, while the Duc de Savoie, his son-in-law, descending the Alps, should cut out for himself a kingdom in the Milanais, and with the leavings of that kingdom enrich the kingdom of Venice and strengthen the Dukes of Modena, Florence, and Mantua; everything was ready for the immense result, prepared during the whole life of a king who was at once a legislator and a

soldier. Then the 13th of May arrived; a carriage with the royal livery passed the Rue de la Féronnerie, and the clock of the Innocents struck three. In a moment all was destroyed, — past prosperity, hopes of the future; it needed a whole century, a minister called Richelieu, and a king called Louis XIV., to cicatrize the wound made in France by Ravaillac's knife. Yes; Dubois was right," cried the duke, "and I must abandon this young man to human justice. Besides, it is not I who condemn him; the judges are there to decide; and," he added, with animation, "have I not still the power to pardon?"

Quieted by the thought of this royal prerogative, which he exercised in the name of Louis XV., the regent signed the paper, and left the room to finish dressing. Ten minutes after the door opened softly, Dubois carefully looked in, saw that the room was empty, approached the table near which the prince had been seated, looked rapidly at the order, smiled on seeing the signature, and folding it in four, placed it in his pocket, and left the room with an air of great satisfaction.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### BLOOD REVEALS ITSELF.

When Gaston returned from the Barrière de la Conférence, and re-entered his room, he found La Jonquière installed by the fireplace and discussing a bottle of Alicante wine, which he had just uncorked.

"Well, Chevalier," said the latter, as Gaston entered, "how do you like my room? It is convenient, is it not? Sit down and taste this wine; it rivals the best Rousseau. Do you drink Rousseau? No, they do not drink wine in Bretagne; they drink cider or beer, I believe. I never could get anything worth drinking there, except brandy."

Gaston did not reply; he was so pre-occupied that he had not even heard what La Jonquière had said. He threw himself into an easy-chair, with his hand in his pocket, holding Hélène's first letter.

"Where is she?" he asked himself; "this immense, unbounded Paris may keep her from me forever. Oh, the difficulty is too great for a man without power or experience!"

"By the way," said La Jonquière, who had followed the young man's ideas easily, "there is a letter for you."

"From Bretagne?" asked the chevalier, trembling.

"No; from Paris. A beautiful writing, — evidently a woman's."

"Where is it?" cried Gaston.

"Ask our host. When I came in he held it in his hand."

"Give it to me, give it to me!" cried Gaston, rushing into the common room.

"What does Monsieur want?" asked Tapin, with his usual politeness.

"My letter."

"What letter?"

"The letter you received for me."

"Pardon, Monsieur, — it is true; to think that I should forget it!" and he gave Gaston the letter.

"Poor imbecile!" said the pretended La Jonquière; "and these idiots think of conspiring! They are like D'Harmental; they think they can attend to love and politics at the same time. Triple fools! if they were to go at once to La Fillon's for the former, the latter would not be so likely to bring them to the Place de Grève."

Gaston returned joyously, reading and re-reading Hélène's letter.

"Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine; a white house behind trees, — poplars, I think. I could not see the number, but it is the thirty-first or thirty-second house on the left side, after passing a château with towers, resembling a prison."

"Oh," cried Gaston, "I can find that; it is the Bastille."

Dubois overheard these words. "*Parbleu!*" he muttered, "I will take care you shall find it, if I lead you there myself."

Gaston looked at his watch, and finding that it wanted two hours of the time appointed for his rendezvous in the Rue du Bac, took up his hat and was going out.

"What! are you going away?" asked Dubois.

"I am obliged to do so."

"And our appointment for eleven o'clock?"

"It is not yet nine. Have no fear; I shall return in season."

"You do not want me?"

"No, thank you."

"If you are preparing an abduction, for instance, I am an adept, and might assist you."

"Thank you," said Gaston, reddening involuntarily, "but I am not."

Dubois whistled an air, to show that he took the answer for what it was worth.

"Shall I find you here on my return?" asked Gaston.

"I don't know; I also may have to reassure some pretty creature who is interested in me. But, at any rate, at the appointed hour you will find your yesterday's guide, with the same carriage and the same coachman."

Gaston took a hasty leave. At the corner of the cemetery of the Innocents he took a carriage, and was driven to the Rue St. Antoine. At the twentieth house he alighted, ordering the driver to follow him; then he proceeded to examine the left side of the street. He soon found himself facing a high wall, over which he saw the tops of some tall poplars; this house corresponded so well with the description in Hélène's letter that he was sure it was the one he sought. But having reached that point he was at the beginning of difficulties. There was no opening in the wall, neither bell nor knocker at the door; those who came with couriers galloping before them to strike with their silver-headed canes could dispense with a knocker. Gaston, indeed, could have played the part of a courier, and could have knocked on the door with his foot, or with a stone; but he feared that orders had been given, and that he would not be admitted. He therefore directed the driver to stop; and wishing to warn Hélène, by a familiar signal, that he was there, he went into a narrow lane which ran along by the side of the house, and going as near as he could to an open window facing the

garden, he put his hands to his mouth and imitated the cry of the screech-owl.

Hélène started. She recognized the cry, and it seemed to her as though she were again in the Augustine convent at Clissons, with the chevalier's boat under her windows. She ran to the window; Gaston was there. Hélène and he exchanged a sign which meant, on the one side, "I expected you," and on the other, "Here I am." Then, re-entering the room, she rang a bell which Madame Desroches had given her, so violently that two servants and Madame Desroches herself all entered at once.

"Go and open the door," said Hélène, imperiously. "There is some one at the door whom I expect."

"Stop," said Madame Desroches to the valet, who was going to obey; "I will go myself and see who this person is."

"Useless, Madame. I know who it is, and I have already told you that it is a person whom I expect."

"But nevertheless, if Mademoiselle ought not to receive this person," replied the duenna, trying to stand her ground.

"I am no longer at the convent, Madame, and I am not yet in prison," replied Hélène; "and I shall receive whom I please."

"But, at least, I may know who this is?"

"I see no objection. It is the same person whom I received at Rambouillet."

"Monsieur de Livry?"

"Monsieur de Livry."

"I have positive orders not to allow this young man to see you."

"And I order you to admit him instantly."

"Mademoiselle, you disobey your father," said Madame Desroches, half angrily, half respectfully.

"My father does not see through your eyes, Madame."

"Yet, who is master of your fate?"

"I! I alone!" cried Hélène, revolting at that appearance of domination.

"Mademoiselle, I swear to you that your father—"

"Will approve, if he be my father."

These words, uttered with all the pride of an empress, cowed Madame Desroches, and she had recourse to silence.

"Well," said Hélène, "I ordered that the door should be opened; does no one obey when I command?"

No one stirred; they waited for the orders of Madame Desroches. Hélène smiled scornfully, and made such an imperious gesture that Madame Desroches moved from the door, and made way for her; Hélène then, slowly and with dignity, descended the staircase herself, followed by Madame Desroches, who was petrified to find such a will in a young girl just out of a convent.

"She is a queen," said the waiting-maid to Madame Desroches; "I know I should have gone to open the door, if she had not done so herself."

"Alas!" said the duenna, "they are all alike in that family."

"Do you know the family, then?" asked the servant, astonished.

Madame Desroches saw that she had said too much. "Yes," said she; "I formerly knew the marquis her father."

Meanwhile Hélène had descended the staircase, crossed the court, and opened the door; on the step stood Gaston.

"Come, my friend," said Hélène.

Gaston followed her; the door closed behind them, and they entered a room on the ground-floor.

"You called me, and I am here, Hélène," said the

young man. "Have you anything to fear? What danger threatens you?"

"Look around you," said Hélène, "and judge."

The young lovers were in the cabinet to which the reader has been introduced in company with the regent and Dubois, when the latter wished the regent to witness his son's emergence from pagehood. It was a charming boudoir adjoining the dining-room, with which, as we are aware, it communicated not only by folding-doors, but also by an opening almost concealed by rare and peculiar flowers. The boudoir was hung with blue satin; over the doors were pictures by Claude Audran, representing the history of Venus in four tableaux, while the panels exhibited other episodes of the same history, all most graceful in outline and voluptuous in expression. This was the house which Nocé, in the innocence of his heart, had designated as fit for a prude.

"Gaston," said Hélène, "were you right, then, in bidding me distrust this man who represents himself to be my father? Indeed, I am more frightened here than I was at Rambouillet."

Gaston examined all those pictures in succession, alternately blushing and turning pale at the thought that there was any one who had believed in the possibility of influencing Hélène by such means. Then he went into the dining-room, and examined all its details, as he had examined those of the boudoir. There were on its walls other similar erotic pictures, with the same voluptuous significance. Then they both went into the garden, plenteously adorned with statues and groups which represented episodes forgotten by the painter. As they returned, they passed Madame Desroches, who had not lost sight of them, and who, raising her hands in a despairing manner, exclaimed, —

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* what will Monseigneur think of this?"

These words kindled the smouldering fire in Gaston's breast. "Monseigneur!" he cried. "You heard, Hélène, — Monseigneur! You have reason to fear, and your chaste instinct has warned you of danger. We are, then, as I feared, in the house of one of those great men who purchase pleasure at the expense of honor. I have never seen these abodes of perdition, Hélène, but I recognize this. These pictures, these statues, these frescos, these mysterious half-lights, these arrangements for service, that the presence of servants may not interrupt the master's pleasure, — believe me, here is more than enough to tell me all. Hélène, do not allow yourself to be deceived. At Rambouillet I foresaw danger; here you have reason to fear it."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Hélène, "but if this man should come; if, by aid of his valets, he should retain me here by force."

"Do not fear, Hélène; am I not here?"

"Oh!" said Hélène, "and must I renounce the sweet idea of finding a father, a preceptor, a friend?"

"Alas! and at what a moment! — when you are about to be left alone in the world," said Gaston, unconsciously betraying a part of his secret.

"What are you saying, Gaston? What is the meaning of these words?"

"Nothing — nothing," replied the young man, "I spoke without thought; pay no heed to what I said."

"Gaston, you are hiding some dreadful secret from me; you speak of abandoning me at the moment I lose a father."

"Hélène, I will never abandon you except with life."

"Ah," cried the young girl, "your life is in danger, and it is in dying that you fear to abandon me! Gaston,

you betray yourself; you are no longer the Gaston of former days. You met me to-day with a constrained joy; losing me yesterday did not cause you intense sorrow. There are more important projects in your mind than in your heart. There is something in you — pride or ambition — more powerful than your love. You turn pale, Gaston; your silence breaks my heart!"

"Nothing — nothing, Hélène, I assure you. Is it surprising that I am troubled to find you here, alone and defenceless, and not know how to protect you? — for doubtless this is a man of power. In Bretagne I should have had friends and two hundred peasants to aid me; here I have no one."

"Is that all, Gaston?"

"That is, it seems to me, more than enough."

"No, Gaston; for we will leave this house instantly."

Gaston turned pale; Hélène lowered her eyes, and placing her hand in that of her lover, "Before these people who watch us," said she; "before the eyes of this purchased woman, who can only plot treachery against me, we will go away together."

Gaston's eyes lighted up with joy; but sombre thoughts quickly clouded them again. Hélène watched this changing expression. "Am I not your wife, Gaston?" said she; "is not my honor yours? Let us go."

"But where to place you?" said Gaston.

"Gaston," replied Hélène, "I know nothing; I can do nothing; I am ignorant of Paris — of the world; I know only myself and you. Well, you have opened my eyes; I distrust everything except your fidelity and love."

Gaston was in despair. Six months before this, he would have paid with his life the generous devotion of the courageous girl. "Hélène, reflect," said he, "if we are mistaken, if this man be really your father — "

"Gaston, it is you who have taught me to distrust that father, — you forget that."

"Oh, yes, Hélène, yes!" cried the young man; "at all risks, let us go!"

"Where are we to go?" asked Hélène. "But you need not reply; if you know, it is sufficient."

"Hélène," said Gaston, "I will not insult you by swearing to respect your honor. The offer which you have made to-day I have long hesitated to make. Rich, happy, sure for the present of fortune and safety, I would have placed all at your feet, trusting to God for the future; but at this moment I must tell you that you were not mistaken; yes, to-day or to-morrow a terrible event may happen. I must tell you now, Hélène, what I can offer you. If I succeed, a high and powerful position; but if I fail, flight, exile, or it may be poverty. Do you love me enough, Hélène, or rather do you love your honor enough, to brave all this and follow me?"

"I am ready, Gaston; tell me to follow you, and I will do so."

"Well, Hélène, your confidence shall not be misplaced, believe me. I will take you to a person who will protect you, if necessary, and who, in my absence, will replace the father you thought you had found, but whom, on the contrary, you have lost a second time."

"Who is this person, Gaston? This is not distrust," she added, with a charming smile, "but curiosity."

"Some one who can refuse me nothing, Hélène, whose fortunes are linked with mine, whose life depends on mine, and who will think I demand small payment when I exact your peace and security."

"Still mysterious, Gaston! really you make me dread the future."

"This secret is the last, Hélène; from this moment my whole life will be open to you."

"I thank you, Gaston."

"And now I am at your orders, Hélène."

"Let us go, then."

Hélène took the chevalier's arm and crossed the drawing-room, where sat Madame Desroches, pale with anger and writing a letter, whose destination we can guess.

"*Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle," she exclaimed; "where are you going? What are you doing?"

"I am going away from a house where my honor is threatened."

"What!" cried the old lady, springing to her feet, "you are going away with your lover?"

"You are mistaken, Madame," replied Hélène, in a tone of dignity, "it is with my husband."

Madame Desroches, terrified, let her hands fall by her sides, powerless.

"And now," continued Hélène, "if the person whom you know asks to see me, you can tell him that, provincial and convent-bred though I am, I have penetrated his schemes; that I have fled from them; and that if he searches for me and finds me, he will find a defender by my side."

"You shall not go, Mademoiselle, even if I am forced to use violence."

"Try, Madame," said Hélène, in the queenly tone which seemed natural to her.

"Halloa, Picard, Coutourier, Blanchet!"

The servants appeared.

"The first who stops me I kill," said Gaston, quietly, as he drew his sword.

"What infernal obstinacy!" cried Madame Desroches;

"ah, Mesdemoiselles de Chartres and de Valois, I recognize you there!"

The two lovers heard this exclamation, but did not understand it.

"We are going, Madame," said Hélène; "do not forget to repeat, word by word, what I told you." And hanging on Gaston's arm, flushed with pleasure and pride, brave as an ancient Amazon, the young girl ordered that the door should be opened for her; the Swiss did not dare to resist. Gaston took Hélène by the hand, summoned the carriage in which he had come, and seeing that he was to be followed, he stepped toward the assailants and said in a loud voice, "Two steps farther, and I tell this story aloud, and place myself and Mademoiselle under the safeguard of the public honor."

Madame Desroches believed that Gaston knew the mystery, and would declare it; she therefore thought best to retire quickly, followed by the servants.

The intelligent driver snapped his whip, and the horses started off at a rapid pace.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THE HOUSE IN THE RUE DU BAC.

"WHAT, Monseigneur, you here!" cried Dubois, entering the salon of the house in the Rue du Bac, and finding the regent seated in the same place as on the previous day.

"Yes; is there anything wonderful in that? Have I not an appointment at noon with the chevalier?"

"But I thought the order you signed would have put an end to these conferences."

"You were mistaken, Dubois; I wish to have another interview with this poor young man. I shall make one more effort to induce him to renounce his plans."

"And if he should do so?"

"Then all will be at an end, — there will have been no conspiracy; there will have been no conspirators. I cannot punish intentions."

"With any other I should not advise such a course; but with him I say, Go on."

"You think he will remain firm?"

"Oh, I am quite unconcerned. But when he has decidedly refused, when you are quite convinced that he persists in his intention of assassinating you, then you will give him over to me, will you not?"

"Yes; but not here."

"Why not here?"

"It will be better, I think, to arrest him at his hotel."

"There, at the Muid d'Amour, with Tapin and D'Argenson's people? — impossible, Monseigneur. Bourguignon's

affair is still in everybody's mouth in that quarter. I am not sure that they even quite believe in the attack of apoplexy, since Tapin now gives strict measure. It will be much better to arrest him as he leaves here, Monseigneur. The house is quiet; four men can make the arrest with ease, and they are already placed in the next room. I will move them, since you insist on seeing him; and instead of arresting him as he enters, they will arrest him as he leaves. At the door a carriage will be ready to take him to the Bastille; so that even the coachman who brings him here will not know what has become of him. No one but Monsieur de Launay will know; and I will answer for his discretion."

"Do as you please."

"That is my usual custom."

"Rascal that you are!"

"But I think Monseigneur reaps the benefit of the rascality."

"Oh, I know you are always right."

"But the others?"

"What others?"

"The Bretons, yonder, — Pontcalec, Du Couëdic, Talhouet, and Montlouis?"

"Oh, the unfortunates; you know their names?"

"And how do you think I have passed my time at the Hotel Muid d'Amour?"

"They will know of their accomplice's arrest."

"How?"

"Having no letter from Paris, they will fear that something is wrong."

"Bah! Is not Captain la Jonquière here to reassure them?"

"True; but they must know the writing?"

"Not bad, Monseigneur! you are improving; but you

take useless precautions, as Racine says. At this moment, probably, they are arrested."

"And who despatched the order?"

"I, *pardieu!* I am not your minister for nothing. Besides, you signed it."

"I! Are you mad?"

"To be sure you did. These men are not less guilty than the chevalier; and in authorizing me to arrest one, you authorized me to arrest all."

"And when did the bearer of this order leave?"

Dubois took out his watch. "Just three hours ago. Thus, it was a poetical license when I said they were all arrested; they will not be till to-morrow morning."

"Bretagne will be aroused, Dubois."

"Bah! I have taken measures."

"The Breton tribunals will not condemn their compatriots."

"That case is foreseen."

"And if they should be condemned, no one will be found to execute them. It will be a second edition of the affair at Chalais. Remember, it was at Nantes that that took place, Dubois. I tell you, Bretons are difficult to manage."

"This is a point to settle with the commissioners, of whom here is a list. I will send three or four executioners from Paris, — men accustomed to noble deeds, who have preserved the traditions of the Cardinal de Richelieu."

"Good God!" cried the regent; "bloodshed under my reign? — I do not like it. As to Count Horn, he was a thief, and Duchaffour a villain. I am tender-hearted, Dubois."

"No, Monseigneur, you are not tender-hearted; you are uncertain and weak. I told you so when you were

my pupil; I tell you so again, now that you are my master. When you were christened, your godmothers the fairies gave you every gift of Nature, — strength, beauty, courage, and mind. But one — whom they did not invite because she was old, and they probably foresaw your aversion to old women — arrived the last, and gave you a yielding disposition; that spoiled all."

"And who told you this pretty tale? Perrault or Saint-Simon?"

"The princess palatine, your mother."

The regent laughed. "And whom shall we choose for the commission?" he asked.

"Oh, you need have no anxiety, Monseigneur. They will be men of intelligence and resolution, — not provincials, not very sensitive to family scenes; men who have grown old in the dust of tribunals, whom the Breton men will not frighten with their fierce looks, nor the Breton women seduce with their beautiful eyes."

The regent made no reply.

"After all," continued Dubois, "these people may not be as guilty as we suppose. What have they plotted? Let us recapitulate. Bah! mere trifles. To bring back the Spaniards into France; what is that? To call Philip V. king, the renouncer of his country; to break all the laws of the State, — these good Bretons."

"Dubois, I know the national law as well as you do."

"Then, Monseigneur, if you speak truly, you have only to approve the nomination of the commissioners I have chosen."

"How many are there?"

"Twelve."

"Their names?"

Dubois read the list.

"Ah, you were right, — a happy choice; but who is to preside over this amiable assembly?"

"Guess, Monseigneur."

"Take care; you must have an honest man at the head of these ravagers."

"I have one, — a man most respectable."

"Who is it?"

"An ambassador."

"Cellamare, perhaps?"

"Faith! I think if you would let him come out of Blois he would not refuse you even the heads of his accomplices."

"Let him stop at Blois, then. Tell me, who is your president?"

"Châteauneuf."

"The Holland ambassador, — the great king's man! *Pardieu!* Dubois, I do not generally compliment you, but this time you have done wonders."

"You understand, Monseigneur. He knows that those agitators yonder wish to set up a republic; and he, who was brought up to know none but sultans, and who has a horror of Holland through the horror of Louis XIV. for republics, has accepted very willingly. We shall have Argram for prosecutor; and he is a man of determination. Cayet will be our secretary. We shall go to work quickly, Monseigneur, for time presses."

"But shall we at least have quiet afterward?"

"I believe so. We may sleep all day and all night, — that is to say, when we have finished the war in Spain, and reduced the public debt; but in the latter task your friend Monsieur Law will be of use to you, — reduction is his strong point."

"*Mon Dieu!* what wearisome labors! Where the devil was my head that I should aspire to the regency? I could laugh heartily to-day to see Monsieur du Maine freeing

himself with his Jesuits and his Spaniards! Madame de Maintenon, practising her small politics, with Villeroy and Villars would drive away the spleen; and Humbert says it is good to laugh once a day."

"Speaking of Madame de Maintenon," replied Dubois, "do you know, Monseigneur, that she is very ill, and that she cannot live a fortnight?"

"Bah!"

"Since the imprisonment of Madame du Maine and the exile of her husband, she says that decidedly Louis XIV. is dead, and she goes weeping to rejoin him."

"Which does not trouble you, eh?"

"Oh, I confess that I hate her cordially; it was she who made the late king open his eyes so wide when I asked for the red hat at your marriage. And, *corbleu!* it was not an easy thing to arrange, Monseigneur, as you know. If you had not been there to set me right with the king, she would have spoiled my career. If I could but have crammed her Monsieur du Maine into this Bretagne affair! But it was impossible; the poor man is half-dead with fear, so that he says to every one he meets, 'Do you know there has been a conspiracy against the government of the king and against the person of the regent? It is a disgrace to France! Ah, if only all men were like me!'"

"No one would conspire, — that is certain," said the regent.

"He has disowned his wife," added Dubois, laughing.

"And she has disowned her husband," said the regent, laughing also.

"I should not advise you to imprison them together; they would fight."

"Therefore I have placed one at Doulens, and the other at Dijon."

"Whence they bite by post."

"Let us put all that aside, Dubois."

"So that they may finish? Ah, Monseigneur, you are a true executioner; it is easy to see that you are determined the blood of Louis XIV. shall be spilled."

This audacious joke proved how sure Dubois felt of his ascendancy over the prince; coming from any other person it would have given rise to a cloud more serious than that which crossed the regent's brow.

Dubois presented the order naming the members of the tribunal, and Philippe d' Orléans affixed his signature, this time without hesitation. Dubois, inwardly rejoicing, though outwardly calm, went out to arrange for the arrest of the chevalier.

Gaston, on his return to the Muid d'Amour, found the same guide awaiting him who had before conducted him to the Rue du Bac. Since he did not wish Hélène to alight, he asked if he could continue his route in the hired carriage in which he had just arrived; the man replied that he saw no objection, and mounted on the box by the driver, to whom he gave directions.

During the drive, Gaston, instead of displaying the courage which Hélène had expected, was sad, and yet gave no explanation of his sadness. As they entered the Rue du Bac, Hélène, in despair at finding so little force of character in him on whom she leaned for protection, said, "Gaston, you frighten me!"

"Hélène, you shall see before long whether I am acting for your good or not."

The carriage stopped.

"Hélène, there is one in this house who will stand in the place of a father to you. Let me go first, and I will announce you."

"Ah!" cried Hélène, trembling, she knew not why; "and you are going to leave me here alone?"

"You have nothing to fear, Hélène; besides, in a few minutes I will return for you."

The young girl held out her hand, which Gaston pressed to his lips; he was agitated by an irrepressible anxiety; he feared he was doing wrong thus to leave Hélène. But at that moment the gate was opened; the carriage was driven through, and the gate was closed. Gaston was persuaded that in this courtyard, surrounded by high walls, Hélène could be exposed to no danger, and besides, it was too late to draw back. The man who had come to the hotel for him opened the carriage door; Gaston again pressed Hélène's hand, alighted, ascended the steps, and entered the corridor, where his guide left him as before, after showing him the door at which he was to knock. Gaston, reflecting that Hélène waited his return, and that therefore he had no time to lose, at once tapped at the door of the room.

"Enter," said the voice of the pretended Spanish prince.

Gaston recognized the voice, which had impressed itself deeply on his memory. He opened the door and found himself in the presence of the chief of the conspiracy. But he felt no longer the trepidations of the former interview; now he was firmly resolved, and with uplifted head and composed manner he approached the pretended Duc d'Olivarès.

"You are punctual, Monsieur," said the latter; "we named noon, and the noon hour is now striking."

"It is because I am pressed for time, Monseigneur; my undertaking weighs on me, — I fear that I shall feel remorse. That astonishes and alarms you, does it not, Monseigneur? But reassure yourself; the remorse of a man such as I am troubles no one but himself."

"In truth, Monsieur," cried the regent, with a feeling

of joy he could not quite conceal, "I think you are drawing back."

"Not so, Monseigneur; since fate chose me to strike the prince, I have gone steadily forward, and shall do so till my mission is accomplished."

"Monsieur, I thought I detected some hesitation in your words; and words are of weight in certain mouths, and under certain circumstances."

"Monsieur, in Bretagne we speak as we feel; but we also do as we promise."

"Then you are resolved?"

"More than ever, your Excellency."

"Because, you see," replied the regent, "there is still time; the evil is not yet done, and —"

"The evil, you call it, Monseigneur?" said Gaston, smiling bitterly; "what shall I call it, then?"

"It is thus that I meant it," replied the regent, quickly; "the evil is for you, since you feel remorse."

"It is not generous, Monseigneur, to dwell on a confidence which I should not have made to any person of less merit than yourself."

"And it is because I appreciate your worth, Monsieur, that I tell you there is yet time to draw back; that I ask if you have reflected, if you repent having mixed yourself with all these —" the duke hesitated a moment, and continued — "these audacious enterprises. Fear nothing from me, — I will protect you, even if you desert us. I have seen you but once, but I think I judge of you as you deserve; men of worth are so rare that the regrets will be for us."

"Such kindness overwhelms me, Monseigneur," said Gaston, who, in spite of his courage, felt some indecision. "My prince, I do not hesitate; but my reflections are those of a duellist who goes to the ground determined to

kill his enemy, yet deploring the necessity which forces him to rob a man of life." Here Gaston paused for a moment, while the earnest gaze of his interlocutor searched the depths of his soul, to discover there some sign of weakness; then he continued: "But here the interest is so great, so superior to the weaknesses of our nature, that I will be true to my friendship if not my sympathies, and will conduct myself so that you shall esteem in me even the momentary weakness which for a second held back my arm."

"Well," said the regent, "but how shall you proceed?"

"I shall wait till I meet him face to face, and then I shall not use an arquebuse, as Poltrot did, nor a pistol as Vitry did; I shall say, 'Monseigneur, you are the curse of France; I sacrifice you to the safety of France!' and I shall stab him with my poniard."

"As Ravaillac did," said the duke, with a serenity which made Gaston shudder; "it is well."

Gaston bowed his head without replying.

"This plan appears to me the surest, and I approve it; but I must ask you one other question: Suppose you should be taken and interrogated?"

"Your Excellency knows what men do in such cases, — they die, but do not answer. And since you have mentioned Ravaillac, that was, if my memory serves me, what Ravaillac did; and yet Ravaillac was not a gentleman."

Gaston's pride did not displease the regent, who had a young heart and a chivalric mind; besides, accustomed to worn-out and time-serving courtiers, Gaston's vigorous and simple nature was a novelty to him, — and we know how the regent loved a novelty.

"I may conclude, then," said he, "that you are immovable?"

Gaston looked surprised that the duke should repeat this question.

"Yes," said the regent; "I see that you are resolved."

"Absolutely," replied the chevalier; "and I await your Excellency's last instructions."

"What is that? — my last instructions?"

"Certainly; your Excellency has not yet committed yourself with me, while I have placed myself body and soul at your disposal."

The duke rose. "Well," said he, "since you require some definite result of this interview, you must go out by that door, and cross the garden which surrounds the house. In a carriage which awaits you on the farther side you will find my secretary, who will give you a pass for an audience with the regent; besides that, you will have the warranty of my word."

"That is all I have to ask on that point, Monseigneur."

"Have you anything else to say?"

"Yes; before I take leave of your Excellency, whom I may never see again in this world, I have a boon to ask."

"Speak, Monsieur; I listen."

"Monsieur," said Gaston, "do not wonder if I hesitate a moment; for this is no personal favor and no ordinary service. Gaston de Chanlay needs but a dagger, and here it is; but in sacrificing his body, he would not lose his soul. Mine, Monseigneur, belongs first to God and then to a young girl whom I love to idolatry. Sad love, is it not, which has bloomed so near a tomb? To abandon this pure and tender girl would be to tempt God in a most rash manner; for I see that sometimes he tries us cruelly, and lets even his angels suffer. I love, then, an adorable woman, whom my affection has supported and protected against infamous schemes; when I am dead or banished what will become of her? Monseigneur, our heads will fall,

— they are those of simple gentlemen ; but you are a powerful adversary, supported by a powerful king, — you can conquer evil fortune. I wish to place in your hands the treasure of my soul. You will bestow on her all the protection which, as an accomplice, as an associate, you owe to me."

"Monsieur, I promise you," replied the regent, deeply moved.

"That is not all, Monseigneur. Misfortune may overtake me, and find me not able to bestow my person upon her; I would yet leave her my name. If I die she has no fortune, for she is an orphan. On leaving Nantes I made a will wherein I left her everything I possessed. Monseigneur, if I die, let her be a widow — is it possible?"

"Who opposes it?"

"No one ; but I may be arrested to-morrow, this evening, on putting my foot outside this house."

The regent started at this strange presentiment.

"Suppose I am taken to the Bastille; could you obtain for me permission to marry her before my execution?"

"I am sure of it."

"You will use every means to obtain this favor for me? Swear it to me, Monseigneur, that I may bless your name, and that, even under torture, nothing may escape me but a thanksgiving when I think of you."

"On my honor, Monsieur, I promise you that this young girl shall be sacred to me ; she shall inherit in my heart all the affection which I involuntarily feel for you."

"Monseigneur, one word more."

"Speak, Monsieur ; I listen with the deepest sympathy."

"This young girl knows nothing of my project ; she does not know what has brought me to Paris, nor the

catastrophe which threatens us, for I have not had the courage to tell her. You will tell it to her, Monseigneur. Prepare her for the event. I shall never see her again but to become her husband. If I were to see her at the moment of striking the blow which separates me from her, my hand might tremble; and my hand must not tremble."

"On my word of honor, Monsieur," said the regent, softened beyond all expression, "I repeat, not only shall this young girl be sacred to me, but I will do all you wish for her; she shall reap the fruits of the respect and affection with which you have inspired me."

"Now," said Gaston, "I am strong."

"And where is this young girl?"

"Below, in the carriage which brought me. Let me retire, Monseigneur; only tell me where she will be placed."

"Here, Monsieur; this house, which is not inhabited, and which is very suitable for a young girl, shall be hers."

"Monseigneur, your hand."

The regent held out his hand to Gaston, and perhaps would have made some farther effort to persuade him, when a little dry cough beneath his windows informed him that Dubois was becoming impatient. He therefore stepped forward to indicate to Gaston that the audience was over.

"Once more, Monseigneur, watch over this young girl; she is beautiful, amiable, and proud, — one of those noble natures which we meet but seldom. Adieu, Monseigneur, I go to find your secretary."

"And must I tell her that you are about to take a man's life?" asked the regent, making one more effort to restrain Gaston.

"Yes, Monseigneur," said the chevalier; "but you will add that I do it to save France."

"Go then, Monsieur," said the duke, opening a door which led into the garden, "and follow the directions I have given you."

"Wish me good fortune, Monseigneur."

"Ah, the madman!" thought the regent; "does he wish me to pray for success to his dagger's thrust? Ah, as to that, in faith I will not."

Gaston went out. The gravel, half-covered with snow, creaked under his feet. The regent watched him for some time from the window of the corridor; then, when he had lost sight of him, "Well," said he, "each one must go his own way. Poor fellow!" And he returned to the room, where he found Dubois, who had entered by another door, and was waiting for him.

Dubois's face wore an expression of malicious satisfaction which did not escape the regent, who watched him some time in silence, as if trying to discover what was passing through the brain of this second Mephistopheles.

Dubois was the first to speak. "Well, Monseigneur," said he, "you are rid of him at last, I hope."

"Yes," replied the duke; "but in a manner which greatly displeases me. I do not like playing a part in your comedies, as you know."

"Possibly; but you might, perhaps, do wisely in giving me a part in yours."

"What do you mean by that?"

"They would be more successful, and the denouements would be better."

"I don't understand what you are talking about; explain yourself, and quickly, for there is some one waiting whom I must receive."

"Oh, certainly, Monseigneur, receive, and we will continue our conversation later. The denouement of this comedy has already taken place, and cannot be changed."

And with these words Dubois bowed with the mock respect which he generally assumed whenever, in the eternal game they played against each other, he held the best cards.

Nothing made the regent so uneasy as this simulated respect; with a gesture he bade Dubois remain. "What is there now?" he asked; "what have you discovered?"

"That you are a skilful dissimulator, *peste!*"

"That astonishes you?"

"No, it troubles me; a few steps further, and you will do wonders in this art, — you will have no further need of me; you will have to send me away to educate your son, who, it must be confessed, requires a master like myself."

"Come, speak out what you have to say."

"Certainly, Monseigneur, for now your son is no longer in question; it is your daughter."

"Which daughter?"

"Ah, true; there are so many. First, the Abbess of Chelles, then Madame de Berri, then Mademoiselle de Valois; then the others, too young for the world, and therefore for me, to speak of; then, lastly, the charming Bretagne flower, the wild blossom which was to be kept away from Dubois's poisoning breath."

"Do you dare to say I was wrong?"

"Oh, by no means. Monseigneur, you have done wonders. Not wishing to have anything to do with the infamous Dubois, for which I commend you, you — the Archbishop of Cambray being dead — have taken in his place the good, the worthy, the pure Nocé, and have borrowed his house."

"Ah," said the regent; "you know that?"

"And what a house! — pure as its master. Yes, Monseigneur, you are full of prudence and wisdom. Let us

conceal the corruptions of the world from this innocent child; let us remove from her everything that can destroy her primitive *naïveté;* this is why we choose this dwelling for her, — a moral sanctuary, where the priestesses of virtue, always doubtless under pretext of their ingenuousness, take the most ingenuous but least permitted of positions."

"And that devil of a Nocé swore to me that all was proper."

"Do you know the house, Monseigneur?"

"Do I look at such things?"

"Ah, no; your sight is not good, I remember."

"Dubois!"

"For furniture your daughter will have strange couches, magic sofas; and as to books, ah, that is the climax! Brother Nocé's books are good for the instruction and formation of youth; they would do well to go with the breviary of Bussy-Rabutin, of which I presented you a copy on your twelfth birthday."

"Yes; serpent that you are!"

"In short, the most austere prudery prevails in that asylum. I had chosen it for the education of the son; but Monseigneur, who looks at things differently, chose it for the daughter."

"Ah, Dubois," said the regent, "come to the point; you weary me."

"I am just at the end, Monseigneur; *incedo ad finem.* No doubt, your daughter was well pleased with the residence; for, like all your blood, she is very intelligent."

The regent shuddered; for he had no doubt that some disagreeable intelligence was portended by Dubois's long preamble and his mocking smile.

"However, Monseigneur, see what the spirit of contra-

diction will do, — she was not content with the dwelling your Highness so paternally secured for her; she is moving out."

"What do you mean?"

"I am wrong, — she *has* moved."

"My daughter has gone away!" cried the regent.

"Exactly," said Dubois.

"How?"

"Through the door. Oh, she is not one of those young ladies who go through the window by night. She is of your blood, Monseigneur; if I had ever doubted it, I should be convinced now."

"And Madame Desroches?"

"She is at the Palais Royal, — I have just left her; she has come to announce it to your Highness."

"Could she not prevent it?"

"Mademoiselle commanded."

"She should have made the servants close the doors; they did not know that she was my daughter, and had no reason to obey her."

"Madame Desroches was afraid of Mademoiselle's anger; but the servants were afraid of the sword."

"Of the sword! Are you drunk, Dubois?"

"Oh, I am very likely to get drunk on chicory water! No, Monseigneur; if I am drunk, it is with admiration of your Highness's perspicacity when you try to conduct an affair all alone."

"But you spoke of a sword! What sword do you mean?"

"The sword which Mademoiselle Hélène controls, and which belongs to a charming young man — "

"Dubois!"

"Who loves her very much — "

"Dubois, you will drive me mad!"

"And who followed her from Nantes to Rambouillet with infinite gallantry."

"Monsieur de Livry?"

"Ah, you know his name. Then I am telling you nothing new, Monseigneur."

"Dubois, I am overwhelmed!"

"Not without sufficient cause, Monseigneur; but see what is the result of your managing your own affairs, while you have at the same time to look after those of France."

"But where is she?"

"Ah, that is the question, — where is she? You don't imagine that I know where she is?"

"Dubois, you have told me of her flight, — I look to you to discover her retreat. Dubois, my dear Dubois, for God's sake, find my daughter!"

"Ah, Monseigneur, you are exactly like the father in Molière, and I am like Scapin, — 'My good Scapin, my dear Scapin, find me my daughter!' Monseigneur, I am sorry for it, but Géronte could say no more. However, we will look for your daughter, and avenge you on her ravisher."

"Well, find her, Dubois, and ask for what you please when you have done so."

"Ah, that is something like speaking."

The regent had thrown himself back in an armchair, his head resting upon his hands. Dubois left him to his grief, congratulating himself that this affection would double his empire over the duke. Suddenly, and while Dubois was watching him with a malicious smile, some one knocked gently at the door.

"Who is there?" asked Dubois.

"Monseigneur," said an usher's voice at the door, there is in the carriage which brought the chevalier a

young lady who wishes to know if he is coming down soon."

Dubois made a bound toward the door, but he was too late; the regent, to whom the usher's words had recalled the solemn promise he had made to Gaston, rose at once.

"Where are you going, Monseigneur?" asked Dubois.

"To receive this young girl."

"That is my affair, not yours; you forget that you abandoned this conspiracy to me."

"I gave up the chevalier to you, but I promised him to be a father to this girl whom he loves. I have pledged my word, and I will keep it; since through me she loses her lover, I must at least console her."

"I charge myself with that," said Dubois, trying to hide his paleness and agitation under one of his diabolical smiles.

"Silence! and do not stir from this place," said the regent. "You are intending me some act of disrespect."

"What the devil! Let me at least speak to her, Monseigneur."

"I will speak to her myself. This is no affair of yours; I have taken it upon myself, and have given my word as a gentleman. Silence, then, and remain here."

Dubois ground his teeth; but when the regent spoke in this tone, he knew he must obey. He leaned against the chimney-piece and waited. Soon the rustling of a silk dress was heard outside the door.

"Yes, Madame," said the usher, "this way."

"Here she is," said the duke. "Remember one thing, Dubois, — this young girl is in no way responsible for her lover's fault; consequently, understand me, she must be treated with the greatest respect." Then turning to the door, "Enter," said he. The door was hastily opened;

the young girl made a step toward the regent, who started back as if thunderstruck.

"My daughter!" he murmured, endeavoring to regain his self-command; while Hélène, after looking round for Gaston, turned toward the regent. As to Dubois, it is easy to imagine his grimaces.

"Pardon me, Monseigneur," said Hélène; "perhaps I am mistaken. I am seeking a friend who left me below, who was to come back to me; but he delayed so long that I have ventured to make inquiries. I was brought here; but perhaps the usher made a mistake."

"No, Mademoiselle," said the duke; "Monsieur de Chanlay has just left me, and I expected you."

As the regent spoke, the young girl became abstracted, and seemed as though taxing her memory; then, in answer to her own thoughts, she cried, "*Mon Dieu!* how strange!"

"What is the matter?" asked the regent.

"Oh, yes; it is indeed the same!"

"Explain," said the duke; "I do not understand you."

"Ah, Monsieur," said Hélène, trembling, "it is strange how your voice resembles that of a person —" she paused, hesitating.

"Of your acquaintance?" asked the regent.

"Of a person in whose presence I have been but once, but whose accents live in my heart."

"And who was this person?" asked the regent, while Dubois shrugged his shoulders at this half-recognition.

"He called himself my father," replied Hélène.

"I congratulate myself upon this chance, Mademoiselle," said the regent; "for this similarity in my voice to that of a person who is dear to you may give greater weight to my words. You know that Monsieur de Chanlay has me for your protector?"

"He told me he would bring me to some one who would protect me from the danger which surrounds me."

"And what danger is that?" asked the regent.

Hélène looked round her, and her glance rested uneasily on Dubois. There was no mistaking her expression. Dubois's face inspired her with as much distrust as the regent's did with confidence.

"Monseigneur," said Dubois (who did not fail to notice this expression), in an undertone to the regent, "I think I am in the way here, and had better retire; you do not want me, do you?"

"No; but I shall presently. Do not go far away."

"I will be at your orders."

This conversation was too low for Hélène to hear; besides she had stepped back, and continued looking at each of the doors in succession, hoping to see Gaston enter by one of them. It was a consolation to Dubois, as he withdrew, to think that she who had come thither to disconcert his plans by discovering herself unaided, would at any rate be disappointed in that expectation. When he had gone out the duke and Hélène breathed more freely.

"Seat yourself, Mademoiselle," said the duke; "I have much to tell you."

"Monsieur, one thing before all. Is the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay in any danger?"

"We will speak of him directly, but first of yourself; he brought you to me as a protector. Now, tell me against whom am I to protect you?"

"All that has happened to me for some days is so strange that I do not know whom to fear or whom to trust. If Gaston were here—"

"Yes, I understand; if he authorized you to tell me,

you would keep nothing back. But if I can prove to you that I know nearly all concerning you?"

"You, Monsieur?"

"Yes, I. Are you not called Hélène de Chaverny? Were you not brought up in the Augustine convent between Nantes and Clisson? Did you not one day receive an order to leave the convent, from a mysterious protector who watches over you? Did you not travel with one of the sisters, to whom you gave a hundred louis for her trouble? At Rambouillet, did not a person called Madame Desroches await you? Did she not announce to you a visit from your father? The same evening, did not some one arrive who loved you, and who thought you loved him?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur; it is all true," said Hélène, astonished that a stranger should thus know the details of her history.

"Then the next day," continued the regent, "did not Monsieur de Chanlay, who had followed you under the name of De Livry, pay you a visit, which was vainly opposed by Madame Desroches?"

"You are right, Monsieur, and I see that Gaston has told you all."

"Then came the order to leave for Paris. You would have opposed it, but were forced to obey. You were taken to a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine; but there your captivity became insupportable."

"You are mistaken, Monsieur; it was not the captivity, but the prison."

"I do not understand you."

"Did not Gaston tell you of his fears, which I laughed at at first, but shared afterward?"

"No; tell me, what did you fear?"

it if he did not tell you, how shall I?"

there anything one cannot tell to a friend?"

"Did he not tell you that this man whom I at first believed to be my father — "

"Believed!"

"Oh, yes, I assure you, Monsieur. Hearing his voice, feeling my hand pressed by his, I had at first no doubt, and strong evidence was necessary to make the filial love which filled my heart give place to fear."

"I do not understand you, Mademoiselle; how could you fear a man who — to judge by what you tell me — had so much affection for you?"

"You do not understand, Monsieur, that almost immediately, as you have said, under a frivolous pretext I was removed from Rambouillet to Paris, and was placed in that house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, and that that house spoke more clearly to my eyes than Gaston's fears had spoken to my heart. Then I thought myself lost. All that feigned tenderness of a father concealed the wiles of a seducer. I had no friend but Gaston; I wrote to him, — he came."

"Then," said the regent, filled with joy, "when you left that house it was to escape those wiles, not to follow your lover?"

"Oh, Monsieur, if I had believed in that father, whom I had seen but once, and then surrounded by mysteries, I swear to you that nothing would have led me from the path of duty."

"Oh, dear child!" cried the duke, with an accent which made Hélène start.

"Then Gaston spoke to me of a person who could refuse him nothing, — who would watch over me and be a father to me. He brought me here, saying he would return to me. I waited in vain for more than an hour; and at length, fearing some accident had happened to him, I came to seek him."

The regent's brow became clouded. "So," said he, turning the conversation, "it was Gaston's influence that turned you from your duty; his fears aroused yours?"

"Yes; he suspected the mystery which encircled me, and feared that it concealed some fatal project."

"But he must have given you some proof to persuade you."

"What proof was needed in that abominable house? Would a father have placed his daughter in such a habitation?"

"Yes, yes," murmured the regent; "that is true,—he was wrong; but confess that without the chevalier's suggestions, you, in the innocence of your soul, would have had no suspicion."

"No," said Hélène; "but happily, Gaston watched over me."

"Do you then believe, Mademoiselle, that all Gaston said to you was true?" asked the regent.

"We easily yield to the opinion of those we love, Monsieur."

"And you love the chevalier?"

"Yes; for the last two years, Monsieur."

"But how could he see you in the convent?"

"By night, coming in a boat."

"And did he see you often?"

"Every week."

"Then you love him?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I love him."

"But how could you dispose of your heart, knowing that you were not your own mistress?"

"For sixteen years I had heard nothing of my family; how could I suppose that all at once it would reveal itself, or rather, that an odious manœuvre should take me from my quiet retreat to my ruin?"

"Then you still think that that man lied? You still think that he was not your father?"

"Alas! I scarcely know what to think, and my mind becomes bewildered in contemplating this strange reality which seems so like a dream."

"But you should not consult your mind here, Hélène," said the regent; "you should consult your heart. When you were with this man, did not your heart speak to you?"

"Oh!" said Hélène, "while he was there I was convinced, for I have never felt emotion such as I felt then."

"Yes," replied the regent, bitterly; "but when he was gone, this emotion disappeared, driven away by stronger influence. It is very simple; this man was only your father, Gaston was your lover."

"Monsieur," said Hélène, drawing back, "you speak strangely."

"Pardon me," replied the regent, more gently; "I see that I allowed myself to be carried away by my interest in you. But what surprises me more than all, Mademoiselle," continued he, "is that, being beloved as you seem to be by Monsieur de Chanlay, you could not induce him to abandon his projects."

"His projects, Monsieur! What do you mean?"

"What! You do not know the object of his visit to Paris?"

"I do not, Monsieur. When I told him, with tears in my eyes, that I was forced to leave Clisson, he said he must also leave Nantes. When I told him that I was coming to Paris, he answered, with a cry of joy, that he was about to set out for the same place."

"Then," cried the regent, his heart freed from an enormous load, "you are not his accomplice?"

"His accomplice!" cried Hélène, alarmed; "ah, *mon Dieu!* what does this mean?"

"Nothing," said the regent, "nothing."

"Oh, yes, Monsieur; you have used a word which explains all. I wondered what made so great a change in Gaston's character, — why, for the last year, whenever I spoke of our future, his brow became dark; why, with so sad a smile, he said to me, 'Let us think of the present, Hélène; no one is sure of the morrow;' why he fell into such reveries, as though some misfortune threatened him. Ah, that great misfortune you have revealed to me in a word, Monsieur. Gaston saw none but malcontents there, — Montlouis, the Pontcalecs, Talhouet. Ah, Gaston is conspiring! — that is why he came to Paris."

"Then you knew nothing of this conspiracy?"

"Alas, Monsieur, I am but a woman; and doubtless Gaston did not think me worthy to share such a secret."

"So much the better," cried the regent. "And now, my child, listen to the voice of a friend, of a man who might be your father. Let the chevalier go alone on the path he has chosen, since as yet you are free to stay your course and remain as you are."

"Who, — I, Monsieur?" cried Hélène; "I abandon him at a moment when you yourself tell me that a danger threatens him that I had not known? Oh, no, no, Monsieur! We two are alone in the world; we have but each other. Gaston has no parents, I have none either; or if I have, they have been separated from me for sixteen years, and are accustomed to my absence. We may, then, lose ourselves together without costing any one a tear. Oh, I deceived you, Monsieur, and whatever crime he has committed, or may commit, I am his accomplice."

"Ah," murmured the regent, in a choking voice, "my last hope fails me; she loves him."

Hélène turned, with astonishment, toward the stranger

who took so lively an interest in her sorrow. The regent composed himself.

"But," continued he, "did you not almost renounce him, Mademoiselle? Did you not tell him the other day, — the day you separated, — that all was over between you, that you could not dispose of your heart and person?"

"Yes, I told him so," replied the young girl, with exaltation, "because at that time I believed him happy, because I did not know that his liberty, perhaps his life, were compromised. Then my heart would have suffered, but my conscience would have remained tranquil; it was a grief to bear, not a remorse to combat. But since I know him to be in danger and unhappy, I feel that his life is mine."

"But you exaggerate your love for him," replied the regent, determined to ascertain his daughter's feelings. "This love would yield to absence."

"It would yield to nothing, Monsieur; in the isolation in which my parents left me, this love has become my only hope, my happiness, my life. Ah, Monsieur, if you have any influence with him, — and you must have, since he confides to you the secrets which he keeps from me, — in Heaven's name, induce him to renounce these projects of which you speak. Tell him what I dare not tell him myself, — that I love him beyond all expression. Tell him that his fate shall be mine; that if he be exiled, I exile myself; if he be imprisoned, I will be so too; and that if he dies, I die. Tell him that, Monsieur; and add — add that you saw, by my tears and by my despair, that I spoke the truth."

"Unhappy child!" murmured the regent.

Indeed, Hélène's situation was a pitiable one. By the paleness of her cheeks, it was evident that she suffered

cruelly. While she spoke, her tears flowed, without violence, without sobs, — as the natural accompaniment of her words; it was easy to see that every word came from her heart, and that she pledged herself to nothing that she would not do.

"Well," said the regent, "I promise you that I will do all I can to save the chevalier."

Hélène was about to throw herself at the duke's feet, so humbled was this proud spirit by the thought of Gaston's danger; but the regent received her in his arms. Hélène trembled through her whole frame, — there was something in the contact with this man which filled her with hope and joy. She remained leaning on his arm, and made no effort to raise herself.

"Mademoiselle," said the regent, watching her with an expression which would certainly have betrayed him if Hélène had raised her eyes to his face, — "Mademoiselle, the most pressing affair first. I have told you that Gaston is in danger, but the danger is not immediate; let us then first think of yourself, whose position is both false and precarious. You are intrusted to my care, and I must, before all else, acquit myself worthily of this charge. Do you trust me, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh, yes; since Gaston brought me to you."

"Always Gaston," sighed the regent, in an undertone. Then to Hélène he said, "You will reside in this house, which is unknown, and here you will be free. Your society will consist of excellent books, and my presence will not be wanting, if it be agreeable to you."

Hélène made a movement as if to speak.

"Besides," continued the duke, "it will give you an opportunity to speak of the chevalier."

Hélène blushed, and the regent continued: "The church of the neighboring convent will be open to you,

and should you have the slightest fear such as you have already experienced, the convent itself might shelter you; the superior is a friend of mine."

"Ah, Monsieur," said Hélène, "you quite reassure me. I accept the house you offer me; and your great kindness to Gaston and myself will ever render your presence agreeable to me."

The regent bowed. "Then, Mademoiselle," said he, "consider yourself at home here. I think there is a sleeping-room adjoining this room; the arrangement of the ground-floor is commodious, and this evening I will send you two nuns from the convent, whom, doubtless, you would prefer to servants, to wait on you."

"Ah, yes, Monsieur."

"Then," continued the regent, with hesitation, "then you have almost renounced your — father?"

"Ah, Monsieur, do you not understand that it is for fear he should not be my father?"

"However," replied the regent, "nothing proves it; that house alone — that indeed is an argument against him; but perhaps he was not acquainted with it."

"Oh," said Hélène, "that is almost impossible."

"However, if he should take any further steps, if he should discover your retreat and claim you, or at least ask to see you?"

"Monsieur, we would inform Gaston, and take his advice."

"It is well," said the regent, with a melancholy smile; he held out his hand to Hélène, and then moved toward the door.

"Monsieur," said Hélène, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Do you still wish for anything?" asked the duke, returning.

"Can I see him?"

The words seemed to die away on her lips as she pronounced them.

"Yes," said the duke; "but is it not better for your sake to do so as little as possible?"

Hélène lowered her eyes.

"Besides," said the duke, "he has gone on a journey, and may not be back for some days."

"And shall I see him on his return?"

"I swear it to you."

Ten minutes after, two nuns and a lay sister entered and installed themselves in the house.

When the regent left his daughter, he asked for Dubois, but he was told that, after waiting half an hour, Dubois had returned to the Palais Royal. And in fact, on entering the abbé's room, the duke found him at work there with his secretaries; a portfolio full of papers was on the table.

"I beg a thousand pardons," said Dubois, on seeing the duke, "but as you delayed, and your conference was likely to be prolonged, I took the liberty of transgressing your orders, and returning here."

"You did rightly; but I want to speak to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, to you."

"To me alone?"

"Alone."

"In that case will Monseigneur go into my cabinet, or into your own room?"

"Let us go into your cabinet."

The abbé made a respectful bow and opened the door; the regent passed in first, and Dubois followed when he had replaced the portfolio under his arm. These papers had probably been got together in expectation of this

visit. When they were in the cabinet, the duke looked round him. "The place is safe?" he asked.

"Certainly; the doors are double, and the walls are two feet thick."

The regent sat down and fell into a deep reverie.

"I am waiting, Monseigneur," said Dubois, in a few minutes.

"Abbé," said the regent, in a quick, decided tone, as of a man determined to be answered, "is the chevalier in the Bastille?"

"Monseigneur," replied Dubois, "he must have been there about half an hour."

"Then write to Monsieur de Launay. I desire that he be set free at once."

Dubois did not seem surprised; he made no reply, but he placed the portfolio on the table, opened it, took out some papers, and began to look them over quietly.

"Did you hear me?" asked the regent, after a moment's silence.

"I did, Monseigneur."

"Obey, then!"

"Write yourself, Monseigneur," said Dubois.

"And why?"

"Because nothing shall induce this hand to sign your Highness's ruin," said Dubois.

"More words!" said the regent, impatiently.

"Not words, but facts, Monseigneur. Is Monsieur de Chanlay a conspirator, or is he not?"

"Yes, certainly; but my daughter loves him."

"A fine reason for setting him at liberty!"

"It may not be a reason to you, Abbé, but to me it is, and a most sacred one. He shall leave the Bastille at once."

"Go, then, and take him out; I do not hinder you, Monseigneur."

"And did you know this secret?"

"Which?"

"That Monsieur de Livry and the chevalier were the same?"

"Well, yes, I knew it. What then?"

"You wished to deceive me?"

"I wished to save you from the sentimentality in which you are lost at this moment. The regent of France — already too much occupied by whims and pleasures — must make things worse by adding passion to the list. And what a passion! Paternal love, — the most dangerous of all. An ordinary love may be satisfied, and then dies away; but a father's tenderness is insatiable, and especially intolerable. It will tempt your Highness to commit faults which I shall prevent, for the simple reason that I am happy enough not to be a father, — for which I congratulate myself daily, when I see the misfortunes and stupidity of those who are."

"And what matters a head more or less?" cried the regent. "This De Chanlay will not kill me when he knows it was I who liberated him."

"No; neither will he die from a few days in the Bastille; and there he must stay."

"And I tell you he shall leave it to-day."

"He must, for his own honor," continued Dubois, as though the regent had not spoken; "for if he were to leave the Bastille to-day, as you wish, he would appear to his accomplices, who are now in the prison at Nantes, and whom I suppose you do not wish to liberate also, as a traitor and spy who has been pardoned for the information he has given."

The regent reflected.

"You are all alike," pursued Dubois, "you kings and reigning princes, — a stupid reason, like all reasons of

honor, such as I have just given, closes your mouth; but you will never understand true and important reasons of state. What does it matter to me or to France that Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny, natural daughter of the regent, should weep for her lover, Monsieur Gaston de Chanlay? Ten thousand wives, ten thousand mothers, ten thousand daughters, may weep in one year for their sons, their husbands, their fathers, killed in your Highness's service by the Spaniard who threatens you, who takes your gentleness for weakness, and who becomes emboldened by impunity. We know the plot; let us do it justice. Monsieur de Chanlay, chief or agent of this plot, coming to Paris to assassinate you, — you cannot deny it, no doubt he told you so himself, — is the lover of your daughter. So much the worse; it is a misfortune which falls upon you. But misfortune has fallen upon many others, and will yet fall upon many. Yes, I knew it all. I knew that he was beloved; I knew that his name was De Chanlay and not De Livry. Yes, I dissimulated, but it was that I might punish him exemplarily, — him and his accomplices; because it must be understood, once for all, that the regent's head is not one of those targets which any one may aim at through excitement or ennui, and go away unpunished if he fails."

"Dubois, Dubois! I shall never sacrifice my daughter's life to save my own; and I should kill her in executing the chevalier. Therefore no prison, no dungeon; let us spare the shadow of torture to him whom we cannot treat with entire justice; let us pardon completely, — no half-pardon, any more than half-justice."

"Ah, yes, pardon, pardon; there it is at last! Are you not tired of that word, Monseigneur; are you not weary of harping eternally on one string?"

"This time, at least, it is a different thing, for it is not

generosity. I call Heaven to witness that I should like to punish this man who is more beloved as a lover than I as a father, and who takes from me my last and only daughter; but in spite of myself I stop, I cannot go on; Chanlay shall be set free."

"Chanlay shall be set free; yes, Monseigneur. *Mon Dieu!* who opposes it? Only it must be later, some days hence. What harm shall we do him? What the devil! he won't die of a week in the Bastille. You shall have your son-in-law again, be assured; but do act so that our poor little government shall not be too much ridiculed. Remember that at this moment the affairs of the others are being looked into, and somewhat roughly too. Well, these others have also mistresses, wives, mothers. Do you busy yourself with them? No, you are not so mad. Think, then, of the ridicule if it were known that your daughter loved the man who was to stab you; the bastards would laugh for a month. It is enough to revive La Maintenon, who is dying, and make her live a year longer. Have patience, Monseigneur; let the chevalier eat chicken and drink wine with De Launay. *Pardieu!* Richelieu does very well there; he is loved by another of your daughters, which did not prevent you from putting him in the Bastille."

"But," said the regent, "when Chanlay is in the Bastille, what will you do with him?"

"Oh, he only serves this little apprenticeship to make him more worthy to be your son-in-law. But, seriously, Monseigneur, do you think of raising him to that honor?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* at this moment I think of nothing, Dubois, but that I do not want to make my poor Hélène unhappy; and yet I really think that giving him to her as a husband would be a condescension, though the De Chanlays are a good family."

"Do you know them, Monseigneur? *Parbleu!* only that was wanting."

"I heard the name long ago, but I cannot remember on what occasion. Meantime we will see. But whatever you may say, one thing I have decided, — he must not appear as a traitor; and remember, I will not have him maltreated."

"In that case he is well off with Monsieur de Launay. But you do not know the Bastille, Monseigneur. If you had ever tried it, you would not want a country house. Under the late king it was a prison, — oh, yes, I grant that; but under the gentle reign of Philippe d'Orléans, it is a house of pleasure. Besides, at this moment there is an excellent company there. There are fêtes, balls, vocal concerts; they drink champagne to the health of the Duc du Maine and the King of Spain. It is you who pay; but they wish aloud that you may die, and your race become extinct. *Pardieu!* Monsieur de Chanlay will find acquaintances there, and be as comfortable as a fish in the water. Ah, pity him, Monseigneur, for he is much to be pitied, poor fellow!"

"Yes, yes," cried the duke, delighted to find a middle course; "and after the revelations in Bretagne we will see."

Dubois laughed. "The revelations in Bretagne! Ah, *pardieu!* Monseigneur," said he, "I shall be anxious to know what you will learn that the chevalier did not tell you. Do you not know enough yet, Monseigneur? *Peste!* if I were in your place I should know it all too well."

"But you are not, Abbé."

"Alas, unfortunately not, Monseigneur; for if I were the Duc d'Orléans and regent, I would make myself cardinal. But do not let us speak of that, — it will come in time, I hope; besides, I have found a way of managing the affair which troubles you."

"I distrust you, Abbé. I warn you."

"Stay, Monseigneur; you love the chevalier only because your daughter does?"

"Well?"

"But if the chevalier repaid her fidelity by ingratitude. *Mon Dieu!* the young woman is proud, Monseigneur; she herself would give him up. That would be well played, I think."

"The chevalier cease to love Hélène! Impossible; she is an angel."

"Many angels have gone through that, Monseigneur; besides, the Bastille does and undoes many things, and one soon becomes corrupted in the society he will find there."

"Well, we shall see; but not a step without my consent."

"Fear nothing, Monseigneur; and now will you examine the papers from Nantes?"

"Yes; but first send me Madame Desroches."

"Certainly."

Dubois rang and gave the regent's orders.

Ten minutes after, Madame Desroches entered timidly; but instead of the storm she had expected, she received a smile and a hundred louis.

"I do not understand it," thought she; "after all, the young girl cannot be his daughter."

# CHAPTER XXIII.

## IN BRETAGNE.

Our readers must now permit us to pause for a backward look; for in giving our attention to the leading characters in our story, we have neglected certain persons in Bretagne who deserve some notice; besides, if we do not represent them as taking an active part in these events of which we write, history is ready with her inflexible voice to call them forth. We must, therefore, for the present, submit to the exigencies of history.

Bretagne had, from the first, taken an active part in the movement of the legitimated bastards. This province, which had given pledges of fidelity to monarchical principles, now carried that fidelity to excess, and even to madness, since it preferred the adulterous offspring of a king to the interests of the kingdom; and its loyalty became a crime when, in aid of the pretensions of those whom it recognized as its princes, it called upon enemies against whom Louis XIV. for sixty years, and France for two centuries, had waged a war of extermination.

We have seen the names of the principal persons who constituted this revolt. The regent had wittily said that this list of names contained the head and tail of the conspiracy; but he was mistaken, — it was the head and body. The head was the council of the legitimated princes, the King of Spain, and his imbecile agent, the Prince of Cellamare; the body consisted of those brave and able

men who were now in the Bastille; but the tail was now agitating itself in Bretagne among a people unaccustomed to the ways of a court, — it was a tail armed with stings like those of a scorpion, and it alone was to be feared.

The Bretagne chiefs, then, renewed the Chevalier de Rohan, under Louis XIV.; we say the Chevalier de Rohan, because to every conspiracy must be given the name of a chief. By the side of the prince, who was a conceited and commonplace man, and even in advance of him, were two men stronger than he, — one in thought and the other in execution. These two men were Latréaumont, a Norman gentleman, and Affinius Vanden-Enden, a Dutch philosopher. Latréaumont wanted money, he was the arm; Affinius wanted a republic, he was the soul. This republic, moreover, he wanted enclosed in Louis XIV.'s kingdom, still further to annoy the great king, who hated republicans even at a distance, who had persecuted and destroyed the grand pensionary of Holland, John de Witt, — more cruel in this than the Prince of Orange, who in declaring himself De Witt's enemy revenged personal injuries, while Louis XIV. had received nothing but friendship and devotion from this great man.

Now Affinius wanted a republic in Normandy, and got the Chevalier de Rohan named Protector. The Breton conspirators wished to revenge themselves for certain injuries their province had received under the regency, and they decreed it a republic, with the power of choosing a protector, even were he a Spaniard; but Monsieur du Maine had a good chance of election. This is what had taken place in Bretagne.

The Bretons lent an ear to the first overtures of the Spaniards; they had no more cause for discontent than other provinces, but to them it seemed a capital opportunity for war, and they had no other aim. Richelieu

had ruled them severely; they thought to emancipate themselves under Dubois, and they began by objecting to the administrators sent by the regent. A revolution always begins with a riot.

Montesquiou was appointed viceroy to hold assemblies, to hear the people's complaints, and to collect their money. The people complained plentifully, but would not pay, because they did not like the intendant; this appeared a bad reason to Montesquiou, who was a man of the old régime, accustomed to the methods of Louis XIV.

"You cannot offer these complaints to his Majesty," said he, "without putting yourselves in the attitude of rebellion. Pay first, and complain afterward; the king will listen to your sorrows, but will not regard your antipathies to a man honored by his choice."

The truth is that Monsieur de Montaran, of whom Bretagne complained, had committed no wrong except that of being intendant of the province. Any other intendant would have given equal offence. Montesquiou did not accept the explanations given, and persisted in his demands. The people's representatives persisted in their refusal.

"Monsieur le Maréchal," said one of the deputies, "your language might suit a general treating with a conquered people, but cannot be accepted by free and privileged men. We are neither enemies nor soldiers; we are citizens, and our own masters. In compensation of a service which we ask, — namely, that Monsieur de Montaran, whom we dislike, may be removed, — we will pay with pleasure the tax demanded; but if the court takes to itself the highest prize, we will keep our money, and bear as we best can the treasurer who displeases us."

Monsieur de Montesquiou, with a contemptuous smile,

turned on his heel; the deputies did the same, and both retired with dignity.

But the marshal was willing to wait; he considered himself an able diplomatist, and thought that private reunions would harmonize all differences. But the Breton nobles were proud. Indignant at their treatment, they appeared no more at the marshal's receptions; and he, left alone, sorely disappointed, passed from contempt to anger, and from anger to the cherishing of foolish purposes. This was what the Spaniards had expected. Montesquiou, corresponding with the authorities at Nantes, Quimper, Vannes, and Rennes, wrote that he had to deal with rebels and mutineers, but that he would have the last word, and that the twelve thousand men in his army corps would teach the Bretons politeness and magnanimity.

The states were held again. From the nobility to the people is but a step in Bretagne; a spark lights the whole. The citizens declared to Monsieur de Montesquiou that if he had twelve thousand men, Bretagne had a hundred thousand, who would teach his soldiers, with stones, forks, and muskets, that they had better mind their own business, and that only.

The marshal assured himself of the truth of this assertion, — that there were in fact a hundred thousand men in the province, organized and armed. He reflected, and suffered affairs to remain as they were, — fortunately for the government. Then the nobility seeing that they were respected, moderated their tone, and made their complaint in a temperate form. But Dubois and the council of the regency treated it as a hostile manifesto, and used it as an instrument.

Montaran and Montesquiou, Pontcalec and Talhouet, were the champions who forced the fighting Pontcalec,

a man of mind and power, had joined the malcontents and encouraged the growth of the struggle.

There was no drawing back; a collision was imminent. The court, however, saw only the revolt, and did not suspect the Spanish affair. The Bretons, who were secretly undermining the regency, cried aloud, "No impost! No Montaran!" to draw away suspicion from their anti-patriotic plots. But the event turned out against them. The regent — a skilful politician — divined the plot without perceiving it; he thought that this local veil hid some other phantom, and he tore off the veil. He withdrew Montaran, and yielded to the demands of the province. Immediately the conspirators were unmasked; all others were content and quiet, they alone remained in arms.

Then Pontcalec and his friends formed the plot we are acquainted with, and adopted violent means to attain their ends, toward which they could proceed no further without discovery. The revolt had lost its motives, but was yet smoking in its ashes. In those ashes, still warm, could not a spark be found to light a conflagration?

Spain was watching. Alberoni, beaten by Dubois in the affair of Cellamare, waited his revenge, and all the treasures prepared for the plot of Paris were now sent to Bretagne. But he was too late; he did not believe it, and his agents deceived him.

Pontcalec thought it was still possible to revive the war, and that then France would make war on Spain. He thought it possible to kill the regent; but it was for him, and not Chanlay, to do what no one would then recommend to the most cruel enemy of France. He reckoned on the arrival of a Spanish vessel full of arms and money, and this ship did not arrive; he expected news of Chanlay, it was La Jonquière who wrote, — and what a La Jonquière!

One evening Pontcalec and his friends had met in a little room near the old castle; their countenances were sad and irresolute. Du Couëdic announced that he had received a note recommending them to take flight.

"I have a similar one to show you," said Montlouis; "it was slid under my glass at table, and my wife, who expected nothing, was frightened."

"I neither expect nor fear anything," said Talhouet; "the province is calm, the news from Paris is good; every day the regent liberates some one of those imprisoned for the Spanish affair."

"And I, gentlemen," said Pontcalec, "must tell you of a strange communication I have received to-day. Show me your note, Du Couëdic, and you yours, Montlouis; perhaps they are in the same writing, and are a snare for us."

"I do not think so," replied Montlouis, "for if they wish us to leave this, it is to escape some danger; we have nothing to fear for our reputation, for that is not at stake. The affairs of Bretagne are known to the world. Your brother, Talhouet, and your cousin have fled to Spain; Solduc, Rohan, Cerantec, Sambilly the counsellor, have all disappeared, — yet their flight was regarded as natural, and as due to some simple cause of discontent. I confess, if the advice be repeated, I shall fly."

"We have nothing to fear, my friend," said Pontcalec; "our affairs were never more prosperous. See, the court has no suspicion, or we should have been molested already. La Jonquière wrote yesterday; he announces that Chanlay is starting for La Muette, where the regent lives as a private gentleman, without guards, without fear."

"Yet you are uneasy," said Du Couëdic.

"I confess it, but not for the reason you suppose."

"What is it, then?"

"A personal matter."

"Of your own?"

"Yes; and I could not confide it to more devoted friends, or any who know me better. If ever I were molested; if ever I had the alternative of remaining or of flying to escape a danger, — I should remain; do you know why?"

"No; speak."

"I am afraid."

"You, Pontcalec? — afraid! What do you mean?"

"*Mon Dieu!* yes, my friends. The ocean offers us a way of escape; we could find safety on board one of those vessels which cruise on the Loire from Paimbœuf to St. Nazaire, — but what is safety to you is certain death to me."

"I do not understand you," said Talhouet.

"You alarm me," said Montlouis.

"Listen, then, my friends," said Pontcalec. And he began the following recital, to which his friends gave most earnest attention; for they knew that if Pontcalec were afraid, it must be for some good reason.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE SORCERESS OF SAVENAY.

"I WAS ten years old, and I lived at Pontcalec, in the midst of woods, when one day my uncle Crysogon, my father, and I started for a rabbit hunt in a warren at five or six miles distance. On our way thither we found seated on the heath a woman reading. Since few of our peasants could read, we were surprised. We stopped and looked at her. I see her now, as though it were yesterday, though it is nearly twenty years ago. She wore the dark costume of our Breton women, with the usual white head-dress, and she was seated on a large sheaf of broom in blossom, which she had just cut.

"My father was mounted on a beautiful bay horse, with a gold-colored mane; my uncle on a gray horse, young and ardent; and I rode one of those little white ponies which to strength and activity unite the docility of a sheep.

"The woman raised her eyes from her book, and saw us grouped before her and looking at her with curiosity. On seeing me firm in my stirrups near my father, who seemed proud of me, she rose suddenly, and approaching me, said, 'What a pity!' 'What do you mean?' asked my father. 'It means that I do not like that white pony,' replied the woman. 'And why not?' 'Because he will bring misfortune to your child, Sire de Pontcalec.'

"We Bretons are superstitious, you know; so that even my father, who you remember, Montlouis, was an enlightened as well as a brave man, stopped, in spite of my uncle

Crysogon's objections, who urged us to proceed; and trembling at the idea of danger to me, he added, 'Yet the pony is gentle, my good woman, and Clement rides well for his age. I have often ridden the little animal in the park, and its paces are perfect.' 'I know nothing about that, Marquis de Guer,' replied the woman; 'but the little white horse will injure your son Clement, I tell you.' 'And how can you know this?' 'I see it,' she replied, in a strange tone. 'But when will it happen?' asked my father. 'To-day.'

"My father turned pale, and I was afraid; but my uncle Crysogon, who had been in the Dutch wars, and had become somewhat hardened by fighting the Huguenots, laughed till he nearly fell from his horse. '*Parbleu!*' said he, 'this good woman certainly is in league with the rabbits at Savenay. What do you say to it, Clement; would you like to go home and lose the sport?' 'Uncle,' I replied, 'I would rather go on with you.' 'You look pale and odd, — are you afraid?' 'I am not afraid?' said I.

"I lied, for I felt a certain shudder pass through me which was very like fear. My father has since owned to me that if it had not been for my uncle's words, which caused a certain false shame in him, he would have sent me home or given my horse to one of the servants. But what an example for a boy of my age, who declared himself to have no fear; and what a subject for ridicule to my uncle!

"I continued, then, to ride my pony; we reached the warren and began the chase. While it lasted, the excitement of it made us forget the prediction; but when the chase was over, and we had started on our road home, — 'Well, Clement,' said my uncle, 'here you are, still on your pony! *Diable!* you are a brave boy.'

"My father and I both laughed; we were then crossing a plain as flat and even as the floor of this room. There was not an obstacle in the way, nothing that could frighten a horse. And yet at that moment my pony gave a bound which shook me from my seat; then he reared violently and threw me off. My uncle laughed, but my father became as pale as death. I did not move; my father leaped from his horse and came to me, and found that my leg was broken.

"It might be possible to describe my father's grief and the cries of the grooms; but my uncle's despair was indescribable. Kneeling by my side, removing my clothes with a trembling hand, covering me with tears and caresses, his every word was a fervent prayer. My father was obliged to console him; but to all his consolations and caresses he made no reply.

"They sent for the first surgeon at Nantes, who pronounced me in great danger. My uncle begged my mother's pardon all day long; and we remarked that during my illness he had quite changed his mode of life. Instead of drinking and hunting with the officers, instead of going on fishing expeditions, of which he was so fond, he never left my pillow.

"The fever lasted six weeks, and the illness nearly four months; but I was saved, and retained no trace of the accident. When I went out for the first time, my uncle gave me his arm; but when the walk was over, he took leave of us with tears in his eyes. 'Where are you going, Crysogon?' asked my father, in astonishment. 'I made a vow,' replied the good man, 'that if our child recovered, I would turn Carthusian, and I go to fulfil that promise.'

"This was a new grief. My father and my mother shed tears. I hung on my uncle's neck, and begged him not to leave us; but the viscount was a man who never

broke a promise or a resolution. Our tears and prayers were vain. 'My brother,' said he, 'I did not know that God sometimes deigns to reveal himself to man in acts of mystery. I doubted, and deserve to be punished; besides, I do not wish to lose my salvation in the pleasures of this life.'

"At these words the viscount embraced us again, mounted his horse, and disappeared. He went to the Carthusian monastery at Morlaix. Two years afterward, fasts, mascerations, and grief had made of this *bon vivant*, this joyous companion, this devoted friend, a premature skeleton. At the end of three years he died, leaving me all his wealth."

"*Diable!* what a frightful tale," said Du Couëdic, smiling; "but the old woman forgot to tell you that breaking your leg would double your fortune."

"Listen," said Pontcalec, more gravely than ever.

"Ah, it is not finished?" said Talhouet.

"We are only at the beginning."

"Continue, we are listening."

"You have all heard of the strange death of the Baron de Caradec, have you not?"

"Our old college friend at Nantes," said Montlouis, "who was found murdered ten years ago in the forest of Châteaubriant?"

"Yes. Now listen; but remember that this is a secret which till this moment has been known only to me, and that no one but ourselves must know it hereafter."

The three Bretons, who were deeply interested, promised him that the secret which he was about to confide to them should be sacredly kept.

"Well," said Pontcalec, "this college friendship of which Montlouis speaks had undergone some change between Caradec and myself, on account of a rivalry.

We loved the same woman, and I was preferred by her.

"One day I determined to hunt the stag in the forest of Châteaubriant; my dogs and huntsmen had been sent out the day before, and I was on my way to the rendezvous, when, on the road before me, I saw an enormous fagot walking along. This did not surprise me, for our peasants carry such immense fagots that they quite disappear under their load, which then, as it is seen from a distance going on before, appears to be moving of its own accord. Soon the fagot which I was following came to a halt; an old woman, turning round, showed her face to me. As I approached I could not take my eyes off her, for I recognized the sorceress of Savenay, who had predicted the misfortune caused by my white pony.

"My first impulse, I confess, was to take another road, and avoid the prophetess of evil; but she had already seen me, and she seemed to wait for me with a smile full of malice. I was ten years older than when her first threat had frightened me. I was ashamed to go back. 'Good-day, Viscount de Pontcalec,' said she; 'how is the Marquis de Guer?' 'Well, good woman,' I replied; 'and I shall be quite easy about him if you will assure me that nothing will happen to him during my absence.' 'Ah! ah!' said she, laughing; 'you have not forgotten the plains of Savenay. You have a good memory, Viscount; but yet if I gave you some advice you would not follow it, any more than you did before. Man is blind.' 'And what is your advice?' 'Not to go hunting to-day.' 'Why not?' 'And to return at once to Pontcalec.' 'I cannot; I have a rendezvous with some friends at Châteaubriant.' 'So much the worse, Viscount, for blood will be spilled.' 'Mine?' 'Yours and another's.' 'Bah! you are mad!' 'So said your uncle Crysogon. How is

he?' 'Do you not know that he died seven years ago at Morlaix?' 'Poor dear man!' said the woman; 'like you, he would not believe; at length he beheld, but it was too late.'

"I shuddered involuntarily; but a false shame whispered that it would be cowardly to give way to such warnings, and that doubtless the fulfilment of the pretended sorceress's former prediction had been but a chance. 'Ah! I see that one experience has not made you wiser, my fine young man,' said she. 'Well, go to Châteaubriant then, since you must have it so, but at least send back to Pontcalec that handsome hunting-knife.' 'And with what will Monsieur cut the stag's foot?' asked the servant who followed me. 'With your knife,' said the old woman. 'The stag is a royal animal,' replied the servant, 'and deserves a hunting-knife.' 'Besides,' said I, 'you said my blood would flow. That means that I shall be attacked, and in that case I shall want it to defend myself.' 'I do not know what it means,' replied the old woman; 'but I do know that in your place, my brave gentleman, I would listen to the poor old woman; that I would not go to Châteaubriant; or if I did go, it would be without my hunting-knife.' 'Do not listen to the old witch, Monsieur,' said the servant, who doubtless was afraid that he might be sent to carry the fatal weapon to Pontcalec.

"If I had been alone, I should have returned; but before my servant — strange weakness of man! — I wished not to have the appearance of drawing back. 'Thank you, my good woman,' said I; 'but really, in all that you have said to me I find no reason for staying away from Châteaubriant. As to my knife, I shall keep it; if I am to be attacked, I must have a weapon to defend myself.' 'Go, then, and defend yourself,' said the old woman, shaking her head; 'we cannot escape our destiny.'

"I heard no more. I urged my horse to a gallop; but as I was about to turn a corner, I looked back, and saw that the old woman was moving slowly along the road. I turned the corner and saw her no more. An hour later I was in the forest of Châteaubriant; and I met you, Montlouis and Talhouet,— for you were both of the party."

"It is true," said Talhouet, "and I begin to understand."

"And I," said Montlouis.

"But I know nothing of it," said Du Couëdic; "so pray continue, Pontcalec."

"Our dogs started the stag, and we set off in pursuit; but we were not the only hunters in the forest. At a distance we heard the sound of another pack, which gradually approached; soon the two courses crossed, and some of my dogs by mistake went after the wrong stag. I ran after them to stop them, and that separated me from you; you followed the rest of our pack. But some one had forestalled me; I heard the howls of my dogs under the lash of a whip. I redoubled my speed, and found the Baron de Caradec striking them. I have told you there were between us some reasons for hatred; that hatred was ready to break forth on the first occasion. I asked him what right he had to strike my dogs. His reply was haughtier than my question. We were alone, we were twenty years old, we were rivals, we hated each other, and we were armed. We drew our hunting-knives, threw ourselves one upon the other, and Caradec fell from his horse, pierced through the body. To tell you what I felt when I saw him bleeding and writhing in agony would be impossible; I spurred my horse, and darted through the forest like a madman. I heard the cry announcing the fall of the stag, and I arrived one of the first; but I remember — do you remember it, Montlouis? — that you asked me why I was so pale."

"It is true," said Montlouis.

"Then I remembered the advice of the sorceress, and reproached myself bitterly for neglecting it. That solitary and fatal duel seemed to me like an assassination. Nantes and its environs became insupportable to me, for every day I heard the murder of Caradec talked about. It is true that no one suspected me, but the secret voice of my conscience spoke so loud that twenty times I was on the point of denouncing myself. Then I left Nantes and went to Paris, — not, however, until I had searched for the sorceress; but not knowing either her name or her residence, I could not find her."

"It is strange," said Talhouet; "and have you ever seen her since?"

"Wait," said Pontcalec; "and listen, for now comes the terrible part. This winter, or rather last autumn, — I say winter, because there was snow falling, though it was only in November, — I was returning from Guer, and had ordered a halt at Pontcalec-des-Aulnes, after a day during which I had been shooting snipes in the marshes with two of my tenants. We arrived, benumbed with cold, at the rendezvous, and found a good fire and supper awaiting us.

"As I entered, and received the salutations and compliments of my people, I perceived in the chimney-corner an old woman wrapped in a large gray-and-black cloak, who appeared to be asleep. 'Who is that?' I asked the farmer, trembling involuntarily. 'An old beggar, whom I do not know, and she looks like a witch,' said he; 'but she was perishing with cold, hunger, and fatigue. She came begging; I told her to come in, and gave her a piece of bread, which she ate while she warmed herself, and now she has gone to sleep.' The figure moved slightly in its corner.

"'What has happened to you, Monsieur le Marquis,' asked the farmer's wife, 'that you are so wet, and that your clothes are splashed with mud up to the shoulder?' 'You nearly had to dine without me, my good Martine,' I replied, 'although this repast and this fire were prepared for me.' 'Truly!' cried the good woman, alarmed. 'Ah, Monsieur had a narrow escape!' said the farmer. '*Jésus Dieu!* and how was that, my good Seigneur?' 'I was near being buried alive, my good Martine. You know your marshes are full of bogs; I ventured without sounding the ground, and all at once I felt that I was sinking in; so that, had it not been for my gun, which I held across, giving your husband time to come and pull me out, I should have been drowned in mud, which is not only a cruel but, worse still, a stupid death.' 'Oh, Monsieur le Marquis,' said the wife, 'in the name of your family, do not expose yourself in this way!' 'Let him alone,' said the sepulchral voice of the figure crouched in the chimney-corner; 'he will not die thus; I foretell that.' And lowering the hood of her gray cloak, she showed me the face of that woman who had twice crossed my path with sad prediction.

"I remained motionless and as if petrified. 'You recognize me?' she asked, without moving. I made a sign of assent, but had not the courage to reply. All gathered in a circle round us. 'No, no,' she continued; 'be easy, Marquis de Guer; you will not die thus.' 'And how do you know that?' I stammered out, with a conviction, however, that she did know. 'I cannot tell you, for I do not know myself; but you know well that I make no mistakes.' 'And how shall I die?' I asked, making an effort over myself to ask this question and to listen to her reply. 'You will die by the sea, Marquis!' she replied. 'How?' I asked; 'what do you mean?' 'I say what I

say, and cannot explain; only, Marquis, I tell you, beware of the sea!' All the peasants looked frightened, — some muttered prayers, others crossed themselves; the old woman returned to her corner, covered her head again with her cloak, and did not speak another syllable."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE ARREST.

"The details of this affair may some day escape my memory, but the impression it made will never be effaced. I had not the shadow of a doubt; and to my mind this prediction had the force of a reality. Yes," continued Pontcalec, "even though you may laugh, like my uncle Crysogon, you will not change my opinion, or take from me the conviction that this last prediction will be fulfilled, as were the two others, and that I shall be brought to death by the sea. So that I declare to you that if the news which we have received were true, if Dubois's agents were pursuing me, and to escape them I had only to take passage in a vessel and gain Belle Isle, — so convinced am I that the sea will be fatal to me, and that no other death has any power over me, that I would give myself up to my pursuers, and say, 'Do your duty, gentlemen; I shall not die by your hands.'"

The three Bretons had listened in silence to this strange declaration, which gathered solemnity from the circumstances in which they stood.

"Then," said Du Couëdic, after a pause, "we understand your admirable courage, my friend; believing yourself destined to one sort of death, you are indifferent to all other danger. But take care; if the anecdote were known it would rob you of all merit, — not in our eyes, for we know what you really are; but others would say that

you entered this conspiracy because you can neither be beheaded, shot, nor killed by the dagger, but that it would have been very different if conspirators were drowned."

"And perhaps they would speak the truth," said Pontcalec, smiling.

"But, my dear Marquis," said Montlouis, "we, who have not the same grounds for security, should, I think, pay some attention to the advice of our unknown friend, and leave Nantes, or even France, as soon as possible."

"But this advice may be wrong," said Pontcalec; "and I do not believe our projects are known at Nantes or elsewhere."

"And probably nothing will be known till Gaston has done his work," said Talhouet; "and then we shall have nothing to fear but enthusiasm, and that does not kill. As to you, Pontcalec, never approach a seaport, never go to sea, and you will live to the age of Methuselah!"

The conversation might have continued in this jocular strain, notwithstanding the gravity of the situation, had Pontcalec been willing to second his friends in maintaining the tone they had assumed; but the sorceress was always before his eyes, pushing back the hood of her cloak and announcing to him in her sepulchral voice that fatal prediction. And besides, at this moment several gentlemen with whom they had appointed a meeting, and who took part in the conspiracy, came in by different secret ways, and in different costumes.

It was not that they had much to fear from the provincial police. That of Nantes, though Nantes was one of the principal cities in France, was not sufficiently well organized to alarm the conspirators, who, besides, had in the locality the influence of name and social position. It was therefore necessary for the lieutenant of police in

Paris, or the regent, or Dubois, to send down special emissaries; and these were easily made known to those whom they had come to watch, by their ignorance of localities, and by their peculiarities of dress and even of speech.

Though this Breton association had many members, we shall occupy ourselves with its four chiefs only, who were above all the others in name, fortune, courage, and intelligence.

They discussed at this session a new edict by Montesquiou, and the necessity of arming themselves in case of violence on the marshal's part. It will be seen that they were inaugurating a civil war. They were preparing to unfold a sacred standard. The pretexts for the war were the impiety of the regent's court and the sacrileges of Dubois, — pretexts which would arouse the anathemas of an essentially religious province against a government so little worthy to succeed the pious and austere reign of Louis XIV.

Pontcalec explained to his companions in rebellion the plan agreed upon by the committee, without a suspicion that at the very moment when he was taking all these measures to overturn the government, Dubois's representative had sent a detachment of police to the residence of every conspirator, with orders to surround the house, and an agent with orders to arrest them. The result of this was that those who had been present at the meeting, while still at some distance from their homes, saw at their gates the glittering muskets and bayonets of the guards. Being thus forewarned, the greater part of them escaped by a speedy flight. Nor was it difficult for them to find places of retreat. The entire province was in sympathy with them, and they found friends everywhere.

ok refuge with their farmers, and a large number

succeeded in gaining the sea and making their escape to Holland, Spain, or England.

Pontcalec, Du Couëdic, Montlouis, and Talhouet, as usual, went out together; but on arriving at the end of the street where Montlouis's house was situated, they perceived lights crossing the windows of the apartments, and a sentinel barring the door with his musket.

"Oh," said Montlouis, stopping his companions, "what is going on at my house?"

"Indeed, there is something new going on," said Talhouet; "and just now I fancied I saw a sentinel at the Hotel de Rouen."

"Why did you not say so?" asked Du Couëdic, "it was surely worth mentioning."

"Oh, I was afraid of appearing an alarmist, and I thought it might be only a patrol."

"But this man belongs to the regiment of Picardy," said Montlouis, stepping back.

"It is strange," said Pontcalec; "let me go up the lane which leads to my house. If that also is guarded, there will be no further doubt."

Keeping together, that they might be ready to meet an attack, they went on silently and came to the corner of the street in which Pontcalec lived, and saw that the house was not only guarded but occupied. A detachment of twenty men kept back the crowd that had assembled.

"This is more than a joke," said Du Couëdic, "and unless our houses have all caught fire at once, I can't imagine what these uniforms have to do with our affairs. As for me, my dear boys, your humble servant is about to change his residence."

"And I, also," said Talhouet. "I shall go to St. Nazaire, and from thence to Le Croisic; take my advice and come with me. I know a brig about to start for

Newfoundland, and the captain is a servant of mine. If the air on shore becomes too bad, we will embark, set sail, and away we go!"

"Come, Pontcalec," said Montlouis, "forget your old witch and come with us."

"No, no," said Pontcalec; "I will not rush on my fate. And besides, — reflect, my friends. We are the chiefs, and we should set a strange example by flying before we even know if a real danger threatens us. There is no proof against us. La Jonquière is incorruptible; Gaston is intrepid; our letters from him say that all will soon be over; perhaps at this very moment he has struck the blow, and France is free. What would be thought of us if at such a time we had taken flight? The example of our desertion would ruin everything here. Consider it well. I do not command you as a chief, but I counsel you as a friend; you are not obliged to obey, for I free you from your oath, but in your place I would not go. We have given an example of devotion; the worst that can happen to us now is martyrdom. But this will not, I hope, be the case. If we are arrested, the Breton parliament will judge us. Of what is it composed? — of our friends and accomplices. We are safer in a prison of which they hold the key, than we should be on a vessel at the mercy of the winds. Besides, before the parliament has assembled, all Bretagne will be in arms. Tried, we are absolved; absolved, we are triumphant!"

"He is right," said Talhouet; "my uncle, my brothers, all my family, are compromised with me. I shall save myself with them, or die with them."

"My dear Talhouet," said Montlouis, "all this is very fine; but I have a worse opinion of this affair than you have. If we are in the hands of any one, it is in those of

Dubois, who is not a gentleman, and consequently hates those who are. I do not like these people who belong to no class, — who are neither nobles, soldiers, nor priests. I like better a true gentleman, a soldier, or a monk, — at least they are all supported by the authority of their profession. However, I appeal, according to our custom, to the majority; but I confess that if our majority is in favor of flight, I shall fly most willingly."

"And I will be your companion," said Du Couëdic. "Montesquiou may be better informed than we suppose; and if it is Dubois who holds us in his clutches, we shall have some difficulty in freeing ourselves."

"And I repeat, we must remain," said Pontcalec. "The duty of a general is to die at the head of his soldiers; the duty of the chiefs of a conspiracy is to die at the head of the conspiracy."

"My dear friend," said Montlouis, "your sorceress blinds you; to gain credence for her prediction, you are ready to drown yourself intentionally. I am less enthusiastic about this pythoness, I confess; and as I do not know what kind of death is in store for me, I am somewhat uneasy on that point."

"You are mistaken, Montlouis," said Pontcalec, gravely; "what especially holds me back is a sense of duty. Besides, if I do not die for this, you will not; for I am your chief, and certainly before the judges I should reclaim the title which I have abjured to-day. If I do not die at the hands of Dubois, neither will you. For God's sake, let us be reasonable, and not scamper off like a flock of sheep who think they smell a wolf. What! are we soldiers, and do we fear to pay an official visit to Parliament? For that is all it will be, — benches covered with black robes, smiles of intelligence between the accused and the judge. It is a battle with the regent; let us accept it, and when

parliament shall have acquitted us, we shall have done as well as if we had put to flight all the troops in Bretagne."

"Montlouis has proposed to refer our decision to the majority," said Du Couëdic. "I support Montlouis."

"That is fair," said Talhouet.

"I said what I did," remarked Montlouis, "not because I am afraid, but because I do not see the use of walking into the lion's mouth if we can muzzle him."

"It was unnecessary for you to say that, Montlouis," said Pontcalec; "we all know you. We accept your proposition, and I will submit the question." And with the same calmness which characterized his ordinary utterances, he called for the vote on which depended his own life and that of his friends: "Those who are in favor of avoiding by flight the doubtful fortune which awaits us will hold up their hands."

Montlouis and Du Couëdic raised their hands.

"We are two and two," said Montlouis; "we must, then, trust to inspiration."

"You forget," said Pontcalec, "that, as president, I have two votes."

"It is true."

"Let those, then, who are for remaining here hold up their hands."

Pontcalec and Talhouet raised their hands; thus the majority was fixed.

This deliberation in the open street might have seemed absurd, had it not involved in its results the question of life or death to four of the noblest gentlemen in Bretagne.

"Well," said Montlouis, "it appears, Du Couëdic, that
're wrong; and now, Marquis, we obey your orders."
what I do," said Pontcalec, "and then do as you
And he walked straight up to his house, followed
three friends. Arriving at the door, he tapped a

soldier on the shoulder. "My friend," said he, "call your officer, I beg."

The soldier passed the order to the sergeant, who called the captain.

"What do you wish, Monsieur?" asked the latter.

"I wish to come into my house."

"Who are you?"

"I am the Marquis de Pontcalec."

"Silence!" said the officer, in a low voice, "and fly instantly, — I am here to arrest you." Then aloud, "You cannot pass," said he, pushing back the marquis, and closing in his soldiers before him.

Pontcalec took the officer's hand, pressed it, and said: "You are a brave young man, Monsieur, but I must go in. I thank you, and may God reward you!"

The officer, surprised, opened his ranks, and Pontcalec, followed by his friends, crossed the court. On seeing him, his family uttered cries of terror.

"What is it?" asked the marquis, calmly; "and what is going on here?"

"I arrest you, Monsieur le Marquis," said an agent of the provost of Paris.

"*Pardieu*, what a fine exploit!" said Montlouis; "and you seem a clever fellow! You are a provost's officer from Paris, and those whom you are sent to arrest are obliged to come and take you by the collar!"

The officer, astonished, saluted this gentleman who joked so pleasantly at such a time, and asked his name.

"I am Monsieur de Montlouis. Look, my dear fellow, and see if you have not an order against me, too; if you have, execute it."

"Monsieur," said the officer, bowing lower as he became more astonished, "it is not I, but my comrade, Duchevron, who is charged to arrest you; shall I tell him?"

"Where is he?"

"Why, at your house, I suppose, waiting for you."

"I should be sorry to keep him waiting," said Montlouis, "and I will go to him. Thanks, my friend."

The officer by this time was bewildered, and bowed quite to the ground.

Montlouis pressed Pontcalec's hand and those of the others; then, whispering a few words to them, he set out for his house, and was arrested. Talhouet and Du Couëdic did the same; so that by eleven at night the work was over.

The news of the arrest ran through the town, but every one said, "the parliament will acquit them." The next day, however, their opinions changed; for there arrived from Nantes the commission, perfectly constituted and wanting, as we have said, neither president, *procureur-du-roi*, secretary, nor even executioners. We use the plural, for there were three.

The bravest men are sometimes stupefied by great misfortune. This fell on the province with the power and rapidity of a thunder-stroke; and the province made no cry, no movement. There is no revolting against a plague; instead of breaking out, Bretagne expired.

The commission installed itself at once, and expected that in consideration of its powers people would bow before it rather than give offence; but the terror was so great that each one thought of himself alone, and merely deplored the fate of others.

This, then, was the state of affairs in Bretagne three or four days after the arrest of Pontcalec and his three friends. Let us leave them awhile at Nantes, in Dubois's toils, and what was taking place in Paris.

# CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE BASTILLE.

And now, with the reader's permission, we will enter the Bastille, — that formidable building at which even the passing traveller trembled, and which to the whole neighborhood was an annoyance and cause of alarm. For often at night the cries of the unfortunate prisoners who were under torture might be heard piercing the thick walls; so that the Duchesse de Lesdiguières once wrote to the governor that if he did not prevent his patients from making such a noise, which kept her from sleeping, she should complain to the king. But at the time of the Spanish conspiracy, and under the mild reign of Philippe d'Orléans, there were no cries to be heard in the Bastille. Besides, the society there was select; the prisoners at that epoch were too well-bred to disturb the repose of a lady.

In a room in the Du Coin tower, on the first floor, was a prisoner alone; the room was large, and resembled an immense tomb lighted by two windows, furnished with an unusual allowance of bars and irons. A painted couch, two rough wooden chairs, and a black table were all the furniture; the walls were covered with strange inscriptions, which the prisoner consulted from time to time when he was overcome by ennui. He had been but one day and one night in the Bastille, and yet already he was pacing his vast chamber, examining the iron-barred doors, looking through the grated windows, listening, sighing, waiting. This day, which was Sunday, a pale sun

silvered the clouds, and the prisoner watched, with a feeling of inexpressible melancholy, the persons whom he saw on the Boulevards. It was easy to see that every passer-by looked at the Bastille with a feeling of terror, and also of self-gratulation at not being within its walls. A noise of bolts and creaking hinges drew the prisoner from this sad occupation, and he saw the man enter before whom he had been taken on his entrance to the prison. This man, about thirty years of age, with an agreeable appearance and polite bearing, was the governor, Monsieur de Launay, father of that De Launay who died at his post in 1789, and who was not yet born. The prisoner, who recognized him, received his visit as an expected incident; he did not know how rare such visits were.

"Monsieur de Chanlay," said the governor, bowing, "I come to inquire if you have passed a good night, and are satisfied with the fare of the house and the conduct of the employés." By this term Monsieur de Launay designated the turnkeys and jailers.

"Yes, Monsieur; and these attentions paid to a prisoner have surprised me, I admit."

"The bed is hard and old; but yet it is one of the best, — luxury being forbidden by our rules. Your room, Monsieur, is the best in the Bastille; it has been occupied by the Duc d'Angoulême, by the Marquis de Bassompierre, and by the Marshals de Luxembourg and Biron. It is here that I lodge the princes when his Majesty does me the honor to send them to me."

"It is an excellent lodging," said Gaston, smiling, "though ill furnished. Can I have some books, some paper, and pens?"

"Books, Monsieur, are strictly forbidden; but if you much wish to read, since many things are allowed prisoner who is *ennuyé*, do me the honor to pay me a

visit. Then you can put in your pocket one of those volumes which my wife or I leave about; you will keep it carefully concealed. On a second visit you will take the second volume; and to this abstraction we will close our eyes."

"And paper, pens, ink?" said Gaston; "I wish most particularly to write."

"No one writes here, Monsieur; or at least, only to the king, the regent, the minister, or to me. But the prisoners sometimes draw, and I can let you have drawing-paper and pencils."

"Monsieur, how can I thank you sufficiently for your kindness?"

"By granting me the request I came to make; for my visit has a selfish purpose. I came to ask if you will do me the honor to dine with me to-day."

"With you, Monsieur! Indeed, you overwhelm me! Society, — your society, too! I cannot tell you how sensible I am of your courtesy, and I should retain for it an everlasting gratitude if I had any prospect but death before my eyes."

"Death! Monsieur; you are gloomy. Does one think of such things when he is alive and well? Think of them no longer, and accept."

"I think of them no longer, Monsieur, and I accept."

"Very good," said the governor, bowing to Gaston, "I will take back your answer;" and he went out, leaving the prisoner plunged in a new order of ideas.

This politeness, which at first charmed the chevalier, on reflection began to arouse some suspicion. Might it not be intended to inspire him with confidence, and lead him on to betray himself and his companions. He remembered the gloomy traditions of the Bastille, the snares laid for prisoners, and that famous dungeon chamber so much

spoken of, which none who had entered ever left alive. Gaston felt himself alone and abandoned. He knew that the crime he had meditated deserved death, and yet they lavished on him these attentions. Did not all these flattering and strange advances conceal some snare? In short, the Bastille had done its ordinary work; the prison acted on the prisoner, who became cold, suspicious, and uneasy.

"They take me for a provincial," he thought, "and they hope that, though prudent under my examination, I shall be imprudent in my conduct. They do not, they cannot, know my accomplices; and they hope that in giving me the means of communicating with them, of writing to them, or of inadvertently speaking of them, they will get something out of me. Dubois and D'Argenson are at the bottom of this."

Then Gaston thought of his friends who were postponing their action until he should have acted, and who, being without news from him, would not know what had become of him, or worse still, on receipt of some false news, might act and ruin themselves.

Then came the thought of his poor Hélène, isolated, as he himself was; whom he had not even presented to the Duc d'Olivarès, her sole protector for the future, who might himself be arrested or have taken flight. Then what would become of Hélène, without support, and pursued by that unknown person who had sought her even in the heart of Bretagne? In a paroxysm of despair at this thought, Gaston threw himself on his bed, cursing the doors and bars which imprisoned him, and striking the stones with his hands.

At this moment there was a noise at the door. Gaston rose hastily, and saw Monsieur d'Argenson enter with a clerk, and behind them an imposing escort of soldiers. He understood that he was to be interrogated.

D'Argenson, with his great wig, large black eyes, and dark shaggy eyebrows, made little impression on the chevalier; he knew that in joining the conspiracy he sacrificed his happiness, and that in entering the Bastille he had sacrificed his life. When one is in this mood it is difficult to frighten him. D'Argenson asked a hundred questions, which Gaston refused to answer, replying only by complaints of being unjustly arrested, and demanding proof. Monsieur d'Argenson became angry, and Gaston laughed in his face; then D'Argenson spoke of the Breton conspiracy; Gaston assumed astonishment, and listened to the list of his accomplices without affording any indication of assent or denial. When the magistrate had finished, he thanked him politely for giving him intelligence of events which were quite new to him. D'Argenson again lost patience, and began to cough, as he was wont to do when mastered by rage. Then he passed from interrogatory to accusation. "You wanted to kill the regent!" said he, suddenly, to the chevalier.

"How do you know that?" asked Gaston, calmly.

"Never mind how, since I know it."

"Then I will answer you as Agamemnon did Achilles, 'Why ask, since you know it?'"

"Monsieur, I am not jesting," said D'Argenson.

"Nor I," said Gaston; "I only quote Racine."

"Take care, Monsieur, you will find that this system of defence will do you no good."

"Do you think it would be a better defence to confess whatever you ask me to?"

"It is useless to deny a fact which is within my knowledge."

"Then permit me to repeat my question: What is the use of asking me about a project of which apparently you are so much better informed than I am?"

"I want the details."

"Ask your police, who read even the most secret thoughts."

"Hum! hum!" said D'Argenson, in a mocking tone which in spite of Gaston's courage made some impression on him, "what would you say if I asked news of your friend La Jonquière?"

"I should say," replied Gaston, turning pale in spite of himself, "that I hope the same mistake has not been made about him as about me."

"Ah!" said D'Argenson, who had closely observed the chevalier, "that name touches you, it seems; do you know Monsieur la Jonquière intimately?"

"I know him as a friend, recommended to me as a guide in Paris."

"Yes; Paris and its environs, — the Palais Royal, the Rue du Bac, and La Muette; he was to show you all these, was he not?"

"They know all," thought Gaston.

"Well, Monsieur," said D'Argenson, "can you find another verse from Racine which will serve as an answer to my question?"

"Perhaps I might, if I knew what you meant. Certainly I wished to see the Palais Royal, for it is a curious place, and I have heard it much spoken of. As to the Rue du Bac, I know little of it; then there only remains La Muette, of which I know nothing."

"I do not say that you have been there; I say that La Jonquière was to take you there. Do you dare to deny it?"

"Faith, Monsieur, I neither deny nor avow; I refer you to him; he will answer you if he think fit."

"It is useless, Monsieur; he has been asked, and has replied."

Gaston felt a shudder pass through him. It was evident that he had been betrayed, but it concerned his honor to divulge nothing; he therefore remained silent.

D'Argenson waited a moment, then seeing that Gaston made no reply, "Would you like to meet La Jonquière?" he asked.

"You can do with me as you please, Monsieur," said Gaston; "I am in your hands."

But at the same time he resolved, if he were to face La Jonquière, he would crush him beneath his contempt.

"It is well. As you say, I am the master, and I choose just now to apply to you the ordinary and extraordinary question," said D'Argenson, emphasizing every syllable. "Do you know what they are, Monsieur?"

A cold sweat bathed Gaston's temples, — not that he feared to die, but torture was worse than death. A victim of the torture was always disfigured or crippled, and either of these alternatives was a cruel one for a man twenty-five years old. D'Argenson saw, as in a mirror, what was passing in Gaston's mind.

"Holloa!" said the interrogator.

Two men entered.

"Here is a gentleman who seems to have no dislike to the question ordinary or extraordinary. Take him to the room."

"It is the dark hour, the hour I expected," murmured Gaston. "O my God! give me courage!"

Doubtless his prayer was heard, for making a sign that he was ready, he followed the guards with a firm step. D'Argenson followed him. They descended the stone staircase and passed the first dungeon in the tower. Then they crossed two courts. As they crossed the second court, some prisoners, looking through their windows and seeing a gentleman well dressed, called out: "Holloa!

Monsieur, you are set free then?" A woman's voice added: "Monsieur, if you are asked about us when you are free from here, say that we said nothing." A young man's voice said: "You are happy, Monsieur, — you will see her you love."

"You are mistaken, Monsieur," said the chevalier. "I am about to undergo the question."

A terrible silence succeeded to these words. Then the sad procession went over the drawbridge. Gaston was placed in a closed and locked chair and taken to the arsenal, which was separated from the Bastille by a narrow passage.

D'Argenson had taken the lead, and awaited the prisoner in the chamber of torture. Gaston found himself in a low room the floor of which was covered with damp. On the walls hung chains, collars, and strange instruments; chafing-dishes stood on the ground, and crosses of Saint André were in the corner.

"You see this," said D'Argenson, showing the chevalier two rings fastened into flag-stones, six feet apart, and separated by a wooden bench about three feet high; "to these rings are attached the head and feet of the patient; then this trestle is placed under him, so that his stomach is two feet higher than his mouth; then we pour pots of water holding two pints each into his mouth. The number is fixed at eight for the ordinary, ten for the extraordinary question. If the patient refuses to swallow, we pinch his nose so that he cannot breathe; then he opens his mouth, then he swallows. This question," continued he, emphasizing every detail, "is very disagreeable, and yet I do not think I should prefer the boot. Both kill sometimes, but the boot disfigures the patient. It is true that the water destroys his health for the future, after he is acquitted; but that is a thing of rare occurrence, since

the prisoner always speaks at the ordinary question if he is guilty, and generally at the extraordinary, even if he is not."

Gaston, pale and silent, listened and watched.

"Do you prefer the wedges, Chevalier? Here, bring the wedges; show Monsieur the wedges."

A man brought six wedges and showed them, still stained with blood and flattened at the upper ends by the blows which had been struck upon them.

"Do you know the way in which these are used?" continued D'Argenson. "The knees and ankles of the patient are pressed between two wooden slabs as tightly as possible; then one of these men forces a wedge between the knees, which is followed by a larger one. There are eight for the ordinary torture, and two larger in addition for the extraordinary. These wedges, I warn you, Chevalier, break bones like glass, and wound the flesh insupportably."

"Enough, enough," said Gaston, "unless you wish to double the torture by describing it. But if it be only through kindness, and to guide my choice of methods that you give me this explanation, I leave it to you, as you must know them better than I; and I shall be grateful if you will choose the one which will kill me most quickly."

D'Argenson could not conceal the admiration with which Gaston's strength of will inspired him. "Come," said he, "speak, and you shall not be tortured."

"I have nothing to say, Monsieur; therefore I cannot."

"Do not play the Spartan, I advise you. One may cry, but between the cries one always speaks under torture."

"Try," said Gaston.

Gaston's resolute air, in spite of the struggle of Nature,

— a struggle which was evidenced by his paleness, and by a slight nervous tremor which shook him, — gave D'Argenson the measure of his courage. He was accustomed to affairs of this kind, and was rarely mistaken. He saw that he should get nothing out of him, yet he tried once more. "Come, Monsieur," said he, "there is still time. Do not force us to do you any violence."

"Monsieur," said Gaston, "I swear, before God who hears me, that if you put me to the torture, instead of speaking, I will hold my breath, and stifle myself, if that is possible. Judge, then, if I am likely to yield to threats where I am determined not to yield to pain."

D'Argenson signed to the tormentors, who approached Gaston; but as they did so he seemed to gain new strength. With a calm smile he helped them to remove his coat and to unfasten his cuffs.

"It is to be the water, then?" asked the man.

"The water first," said D'Argenson.

They passed the cords through the rings, brought the tressels, and filled the vases. Gaston did not flinch.

D'Argenson reflected. After about ten minutes' thought, which seemed an age to the chevalier, "Let him go," said D'Argenson, with a grunt of discontent, "and take him back to the Bastille."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### HOW THEY LIVED IN THE BASTILLE WHILE WAITING FOR DEATH.

GASTON was inclined to thank the lieutenant of police, but he refrained; it might appear as though he had been afraid. He took his hat and coat, readjusted his cuffs, and returned to the Bastille by the same course he had taken in coming.

"They did not like to have a record of torture inflicted on a man of high birth," thought he; "they will content themselves with trying me and condemning me to death."

But death seemed easy when divested of the preliminary agonies which the lieutenant of police had so minutely described. Nay, more, on re-entering his room Gaston looked with a sort of happiness on all that had seemed so horrible to him an hour before. The prison seemed gay, the view charming, the saddest inscriptions on the walls were madrigals compared to the menacing instruments on the walls of the room he had just left; even the jailers seemed to Gaston to be gentlemen of fine appearance, in comparison with the executioners. After he had remained thus about an hour, enjoying this comparison, the major of the Bastille came for him, accompanied by a turnkey.

"I understand," thought Gaston; "the governor's invitation is a pretext, in such a case, to take from the prisoner the anguish of expectation. I shall doubtless be led over some dungeon, into which I shall fall and die.

God's will be done!" And with a firm step he followed the major, expecting every moment to be precipitated through some hidden opening, and murmuring Hélène's name, that he might die with it on his lips. But no accident followed this poetical and mysterious invocation, and the prisoner arrived safely at the governor's door.

Monsieur de Launay came to meet him. "Will you give me your word of honor, Chevalier," said he, "not to attempt to escape while you are in my house? It is understood, of course," he added, smiling, "that this parole is withdrawn as soon as you are taken back to your own room, and that it is only a precaution to insure me a continuance of your society."

"I give you my word so far," said Gaston.

"'T is well, Monsieur, enter; you are expected." And he led Gaston to a well-furnished salon, where a numerous company was already assembled.

"I have the honor to present to you Monsieur le Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay," said the governor, then naming in turn each of the persons assembled, —

"Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu.

"Monsieur le Comte de Laval.

"Monsieur le Chevalier Dumesnil.

"Monsieur de Malezieux."

"Ah," remarked Gaston, smiling, "all the Cellamare conspiracy."

"Except Monsieur and Madame du Maine, and the Prince of Cellamare," said the Abbé Brigaud, bowing.

"Ah, Monsieur," said Gaston, in a reproachful tone, "you forget the brave D'Harmental and the learned Mademoiselle de Launay."

"D'Harmental is kept in bed by his wounds," said Brigaud.

"As to Mademoiselle de Launay," said the Chevalier

Dumesnil, reddening with pleasure, "here she comes; she does us the honor of dining with us."

"Present me, Monsieur," said Gaston; "among prisoners we must not make ceremonies. I reckon, therefore, on you."

Dumesnil, taking Gaston by the hand, presented him to Mademoiselle de Launay.

Gaston could not repress a certain expression of astonishment at all he saw.

"Ah, Chevalier," said the governor, "I see that, like three quarters of the inhabitants of Paris, you thought I devoured my prisoners."

"No, Monsieur," said Gaston, smiling; "but I confess that I thought for a moment that I should not have had the honor of dining with you to-day."

"How so?"

"Is it your custom to give your prisoners an appetite by compelling them, before dinner, to take the walk which I—"

"Ah, yes," cried Mademoiselle de Launay, "was it not you who were being led to the torture just now?"

"Myself, Mademoiselle; and be assured that only such a hindrance would have kept me from so charming a company."

"Ah, these things are not in my jurisdiction," said the governor. "Thank Heaven, I am a soldier, and not a judge. Do not confound arms and the toga, as Cicero says. My business is to keep you here, and to make your stay as agreeable as possible, so that I may have the pleasure of seeing you again. Monsieur d'Argenson's business is to have you tortured, hung, beheaded, put on the wheel, quartered, if he can; each to his task. Mademoiselle de Launay, dinner is ready," he added, seeing

that the folding-doors were thrown open; "will you take my arm? Your pardon, Chevalier Dumesnil; you think me a tyrant, I am sure, but as host I am privileged. Gentlemen, seat yourselves."

"Oh!" said the Duc de Richelieu, from his place between Mademoiselle de Launay and the Comte de Laval, as he delicately adjusted his cuffs, "how horrible a prison is! — slavery, irons, bolts, chains."

"Shall I pass you this *potage aux écrevisses?*" said the governor.

"Yes, Monsieur," said the duke; "your cook prepares it with wonderful skill. I am really annoyed that mine did not conspire with me; he might have profited by his stay in the Bastille, and taken lessons of yours."

"Monsieur le Comte de Laval," said the governor, "you have champagne near you; I beg you will not neglect your neighbor."

Laval gloomily filled a glass with champagne, which he swallowed to the last drop.

"I have it straight from Ai," said De Launay.

"You must give me the address of your caterer," said Richelieu; "for if the regent fails to cut off my four heads I shall drink no other wine than this. I have got accustomed to it during my three sojourns here, and I am a creature of habit."

"In fact," said the governor, "the Duc de Richelieu is an example for you, Monsieur. He is one of those who are faithful to me, — so that, unless we are over-crowded, I always keep his room ready for him."

"That tyrant of a regent may force us all to keep a room here," said Brigaud.

"Then Monsieur l'Abbé, carve those partridges," said

the governor. "I have always noticed that you men of the Church excel in exercises of that kind."

"You do me honor, Monsieur," said Brigaud, drawing to himself the silver platter containing the birds referred to, which he immediately proceeded to dissect with a skill which proved that Monsieur de Launay was a good observer.

"Monsieur de Launay," said the Comte de Laval, in an irritated tone, "can you tell me if it was by your orders that I was roused from my sleep at two o'clock this morning, and explain to me the meaning of this persecution?"

"It is not my fault, Monsieur; you must blame these gentlemen and ladies, who will not keep quiet, in spite of all I tell them."

"We!" cried all the guests.

"Certainly," replied the governor, "you all break through rules; I am always having reports of communications, correspondences, notes, etc."

Richelieu laughed; Dumesnil and Mademoiselle de Launay blushed to the whites of their eyes.

"But we will speak of that at dessert," said the governor. "You do not drink, Monsieur de Chanlay?"

"No, Monsieur; I am listening."

"Say that you are dreaming; you cannot deceive me thus."

"And of what?" asked Malezieux.

"Ah, it is easy to see that you are getting old, my poetical friend; of what should Monsieur de Chanlay dream but of his love?"

"Is it not better, Monsieur de Chanlay," cried Richelieu, "to have the head separated from the body than the body from the soul?"

"Ah, bravo! bravo!" cried Malezieux; "beautiful,

charming! Monsieur le Duc, I will turn it into a distich for Madame du Maine: —

> Il vaut mieux séparer, n'est-il pas vrai, Madame,
> La tête de son corps que le corps de son âme.

What do you think of the idea now that it is in verse?"

"That it is a little more worthless than when it was in prose," replied the duke.

"By the way," interrupted Laval, "is there any news from the court; how is the king?"

"No politics, gentlemen, if you please," said the governor. "Let us discuss poetry, arts, war, and even the Bastille, if you like, but let us avoid politics."

"Ah, yes," said Richelieu, "let us talk of the Bastille. What have you done with Pompadour?"

"I am sorry to say he forced me to place him in the dungeon."

"In the dungeon!" exclaimed Gaston. "What, then, had the marquis done?"

"He had beaten his jailer."

"How long has it been forbidden that a gentleman should beat his servant?" asked Richelieu.

"The jailers are servants of the king, Monsieur le Duc," said De Launay, smiling.

"Say rather of the regent, Monsieur."

"A subtle distinction."

"And for that reason the more just."

"Shall I pass you the chambertin, Monsieur de Laval?" asked the governor.

"If you will drink with me to the health of the king."

"Certainly, if afterward you will drink with me to the health of the regent."

"Monsieur," said Laval, "I am no longer thirsty."

"I believe it; you have just drunk some wine from his Highness's cellar."

"What! from the regent's?"

"He sent it me yesterday, knowing that sometimes I enjoyed the pleasure of your company."

"In that case," said Brigaud, throwing the contents of his glass upon the floor, "no more poison!"

"Oh!" said Malezieux, "the abbé throws away his wine rather than drink it! I did n't know you were such a fanatic for the good cause."

"You were wrong to spill it, Abbé," said Richelieu; "I know that wine, and you will hardly find such outside the Palais Royal. If it was against your principles to drink it, you should have passed it to your neighbor, or put it back in the bottle. 'Vinum in amphoram,' said my schoolmaster."

"Monsieur le Duc," said Brigaud, "permit me to say that you do not know Latin as well as you do Spanish."

"Not bad, Abbé," said Richelieu; "but there is another language with which I am less acquainted than with either of them, and which I should like to learn, — I mean the French language."

"Bah!" said Malezieux, "that would be a long and tedious task; better get admitted into the Academy, — it would be far easier."

"And you, Monsieur le Chevalier, do you also speak Spanish?" asked Richelieu of De Chanlay.

"Report says, Monsieur, that I am here for the abuse of that tongue."

"Monsieur," said the governor, "I warn you that if we fall into politics I shall be obliged to leave the table. That would be inconvenient, for I suppose you would be too polite to remain here after my departure."

"Then," said Richelieu, "tell Mademoiselle de Launay to talk mathematics; that will not frighten any one."

Mademoiselle de Launay started; she had been exchanging glances with the Chevalier Dumesnil, sitting on the other side of the table. This sort of conversation did not, indeed, disturb the governor; but on the other hand it was extremely annoying to the lieutenant of the Bastille, Maison-Rouge, who was much in love with Mademoiselle de Launay, and made every effort to be acceptable to his prisoner, — a project in which, unfortunately, the Chevalier Dumesnil was, as we have seen, more successful than he.

Thanks to the governor's warning remarks, the conversation during the remainder of the repast was very reserved in respect to his Royal Highness and his minister. The prisoners, for whom these reunions permitted by the regent were a great diversion, were content to speak on other subjects; and Gaston thought that this dinner-party in the Bastille was one of the brightest and most charming he had ever known. Besides, his curiosity was excited. He was face to face with personages whose names were celebrated both for their ancestry and for their own talents, — celebrated, too, by the recent renown gained to them by the conspiracy of Cellamare. And all these personages, — men of the world, noblemen of high rank, poets, and men of learning, — were at that time at the height of their reputation.

When dinner was over the governor had the guests conducted one by one to their respective rooms. They thanked him for his courtesy, without perceiving that, notwithstanding the parole they had given, the two rooms adjoining the dining-room were filled with guards, and that during the repast they had been so closely watched

that any written communication among them would have been impossible. Gaston saw nothing of this, and his surprise continued. Those customs in a prison that was spoken of only with terror, the contrast of that scene with the chamber of tortures he had so recently visited, upset all his ideas. When his turn came to withdraw, he saluted Monsieur de Launay, and taking up the conversation where they had dropped it in the morning, he asked if it would be possible for him to secure razors, — instruments which seemed to him an absolute necessity in a place where one met so excellent and so elegant company.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," said the governor, "I am distressed to refuse you a thing of which I see the necessity; but it is against the rules for prisoners to shave themselves unless they have special permission from the lieutenant of police, — no doubt you will obtain the permission if you apply for it."

"But those gentlemen with whom I have dined, so well dressed and well shaved, — are they privileged?"

"No, they all had to ask permission; the Duc de Richelieu remained for a month with a beard like a patriarch."

"I find it difficult to reconcile such severity in detail with the liberty I have just seen."

"Monsieur, I also have my privileges, which however do not extend to giving you books, razors, or pens, but which allow me to invite to my table such prisoners as I choose to favor, — supposing," he added with a smile, "that it is a favor. True, it is stipulated that I shall give an account of anything which is spoken against the government; but by preventing my guests from touching on politics I avoid the necessity of betraying them."

"Is it not feared, Monsieur," said Gaston, "that this intimacy between you and your prisoners may lead to

indulgences on your part which may be contrary to the intentions of the government?"

"I know my duty, Monsieur, and keep within its strict limits. Guests of mine, such as you have seen them to-day, have sometimes passed from their chambers to the dungeon, where one of them now is. The orders of the court follow them, and they do not come back. I receive these guests, I serve them; and they, knowing that I count for nothing in the proceedings against them, and that on the contrary I soften their hard lot as far as I am able, bear me no ill-will. I trust that you will follow their example, Monsieur, if, — which I have no reason to expect, — any order should come to me which might not accord with your wishes."

Gaston smiled gloomily. "The precaution is not useless, Monsieur," said he; "for probably I shall not long be left in the enjoyment of such pleasure as I have had to-day."

"You have doubtless some protector at court?"

"None," said Gaston.

"Some friend in power who watches over you?"

"I know of none."

"Then you must trust to chance, Monsieur."

"I have never found it propitious."

"The more reason that it should weary of persecuting you."

"Besides, I am a Breton, and Bretons trust only in God."

"Take that as my meaning when I said chance."

Gaston retired, charmed with the manners and attentions of Monsieur de Launay.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### HOW THEY SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE BASTILLE WHILE WAITING FOR THE DAY.

Gaston had already, on the preceding night, asked for a light, and had been told that it was against the rules. This night he did not renew the request, but went quietly to bed; his morning's visit to the torture-room had given him a lesson in philosophy. Within twenty minutes he was sound asleep, — by force of youthful confidence, strength of character, and, more than all, the imperious demands of Nature.

It would have been difficult for the chevalier to say how long he had slept when he was awoke by the sound of a small bell which seemed to be in his room, although he could see neither bell nor ringer; it is true that the room was very dark, even by day, and it was doubly so at that hour. The bell, however, continued to sound distinctly, but with caution, as though it were afraid of being heard. Gaston thought the sound seemed to come from the chimney. He rose, and approaching it gently, became convinced that he was right. Presently he heard blows struck under the floor on which he stepped, at regular intervals, with some blunt instrument. It was evident that these were signals among the prisoners.

Gaston went to the window to raise the curtain of green serge which intercepted the rays of the moon, and in doing so he perceived an object hanging at the end of a string and swinging before the bars.

"Good!" said he, "it appears that I shall have occupation; but each one in turn. Regularity is necessary, especially in prison. Let us see what the bell wants; that has the prior claim."

Gaston returned to the chimney, extended his hand, and soon felt a string. At the end of the string a bell was hanging; he pulled, but it resisted.

"Ah," said a voice which came down the chimney, "you are there?"

"Yes," said Gaston; "what do you want?"

"*Parbleu*, I want to talk."

"Very well," said the chevalier, "let us talk."

"Are you not Monsieur de Chanlay, with whom I had the pleasure of dining to-day?"

"Exactly so, Monsieur."

"In that case I am at your service."

"And I at yours."

"Then have the goodness to tell me where now are the affairs of Bretagne."

"You see, Monsieur, they are in the Bastille."

"Good!" said the voice, in a tone of unconstrained delight.

"Pardon me," said Gaston, "but what interest have you, Monsieur, in what occurs in Bretagne?"

"Why, when affairs are bad in Bretagne, they treat us well, and when those affairs prosper we are treated badly; thus the other day, apropos of some affair, — I do not know what, — which they pretended was connected with ours, we were all put in the dungeon."

"Ah, *diable*," said Gaston to himself; "if you do not know, I do." Then he added, aloud, "Well, then, Monsieur, be content; the affairs of Bretagne are in a bad state, and that is perhaps the reason why we had the pleasure of dining together to-day."

"Eh, Monsieur, are you compromised?"

"I fear so."

"Receive my excuses."

"I beg you, on the contrary, to accept mine. But I have a neighbor below who is becoming impatient, and is striking hard enough to break the boards of my floor; permit me to reply to him."

"Do so, Monsieur. If my topographical calculations are correct, it must be the Marquis de Pompadour."

"It will be difficult to ascertain."

"Not so difficult as you suppose."

"How so?"

"Does he not strike in a peculiar manner?"

"Yes; has it a meaning?"

"Certainly; it is our method of talking without direct communication."

"Have the kindness to give me the key to the vocabulary."

"It is not difficult; every letter has a rank in the alphabet, has it not?"

"Decidedly."

"There are twenty-four letters?"

"I have never counted them; but no doubt you are right."

"Well, one blow for *a*, two for *b*, three for *c*, and so on."

"I understand; but this method of communication must be somewhat tedious, and I see a string at my window which also seems to be impatient. I will strike a blow or two to show my neighbor down below that I have heard him, and then attend to the string."

"Go, Monsieur, I beg; for if I am not mistaken that string is of importance to me. But first strike three blows on the floor, — in Bastille language that means

patience; the prisoner will then wait till you give him a new signal."

Gaston struck three blows with the leg of his chair, and the noise from below ceased. He then went to the window. It was not easy to reach the bars, but by climbing on his table he at length succeeded in doing so, and seized the string, which was gently pulled by some hand as a sign of acknowledgment.

Gaston drew the packet — which would scarcely pass the bars — toward him; it contained a pot of sweetmeats and a book. He saw that there was something written on the paper which covered the pot, but it was too dark to read it. The string vibrated gently, to show that an answer was expected, and Gaston, remembering his neighbor's lesson, took a broom which he saw in the corner, and struck three blows on the ceiling. This, it will be remembered, meant "patience." The prisoner withdrew the string, freed from its burden.

Gaston returned to the chimney. "Eh, Monsieur!" said he.

"All right; what is it?"

"I have just received, by means of a string, a pot of sweets and a book."

"Is not there something written on one of them?"

"About the book I do not know, but there is on the pot; unfortunately, it is too dark to read."

"Wait," said the voice, "I will send a light."

"I thought lights were forbidden."

"Yes; but I have procured one."

"Well, then, send it, for I am as impatient as you to know what is written to me." And Gaston, feeling cold, began to dress himself. All at once he saw a light in his chimney; the bell came down again transformed into a lantern.

This transformation was effected in the most simple manner; the bell was turned upside down, so as to form a vessel, into which some oil had been poured, and in the oil burned a little wick.

Gaston found this so ingenious that for a moment he forgot both the pot and the book. "Monsieur," said he to his neighbor, "may I, without indiscretion, ask you how you procured the different objects with which you fabricated this lamp?"

"Nothing more simple, Monsieur. I asked for a bell, which was given me; then I saved some oil from my breakfasts and dinners, till I had a bottle full. I made wicks by unravelling one of my handkerchiefs; I picked up a pebble when I was walking in the yard; I made some tinder with burned linen; I stole some matches when I dined at the governor's; then I struck a light with a knife which I possess, and with which I made the hole through which we correspond."

"Receive my compliments, Monsieur; you are a man of great invention."

"Thank you, Monsieur. Will you now see what book has been sent you, and what is written on the paper of the pot of sweetmeats."

"Monsieur, the book is a Virgil."

"That is it, — she promised it to me," cried the voice, with an accent of happiness which surprised the chevalier, who could not understand that a Virgil should be so impatiently expected.

"Now," said the prisoner with the bell, "pass on, I beg, to the paper around the pot of sweetmeats."

"Willingly," said Gaston; and he read, —

MONSIEUR LE CHEVALIER, — I hear from the lieutenant of the prison that you occupy the room on the first floor, which has a window immediately below mine. Prisoners should aid

and help each other; eat the sweetmeats, and pass the Virgil up to the Chevalier Dumesnil, whose window looks only on the court.

"That is what is expected," said the prisoner with the bell; "I was told at dinner to-day that I should receive this message."

"Then you are the Chevalier Dumesnil?"

"Yes, Monsieur, and your humble servant."

"I am yours," replied Gaston, laughing. "I have to thank you for a pot of sweetmeats, and I shall not forget my obligation."

"In that case, Monsieur," replied the prisoner, "have the kindness to detach the bell, and fasten on the Virgil instead."

"But if you have not the light, you cannot read."

"Oh, I will make another lantern."

Gaston, who trusted to his neighbor's ingenuity, after the proofs he had had of it, made no further difficulties; he took the bell, which he placed in the neck of an empty bottle, and fastened on the Virgil, conscientiously replacing a letter which fell from between the leaves. The cord was quickly drawn up.

"Thank you, Monsieur," said Dumesnil; "and now, if you will reply to your neighbor below —"

"You give me liberty?"

"Yes, Monsieur; though presently I shall make an appeal to your good nature."

ur orders, Monsieur; you say, then, that for the

low for *a*; twenty-four for *z*."

: you."

evalier struck a blow with the handle of the to give notice to his neighbor that he was ready to into conversation with him; it was instantly an-

swered by another blow. At the end of half an hour the prisoners had succeeded in saying, —

"Good-evening, Monsieur; what is your name?"

"Thank you, Monsieur; I am the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

"And I, the Marquis de Pompadour."

At this moment Gaston, looking toward the window, saw the string shaking convulsively.

He struck three blows, to ask for patience, and returned to the chimney.

"Monsieur," said he to Dumesnil, "I have the honor to inform you that the string at the window seems exceedingly impatient."

"Beg her to have patience, Monsieur; I will attend to her presently."

Gaston renewed the signal for patience on the ceiling, and then returned to the chimney; in a few moments the Virgil descended.

"Monsieur," said Dumesnil, "have the goodness to fasten the Virgil to the string; that is what she wants."

Gaston had the curiosity to see if Dumesnil had replied to Mademoiselle de Launay. He opened the Virgil; there was no letter, but some words were underlined in pencil, and Gaston read: "meos amores," and "carceris oblivia longa." He understood this method of correspondence, which consisted in underlining words which, placed together, made sense. The Chevalier Dumesnil and Mademoiselle de Launay had selected, as affording analogous circumstances to their own, and language in harmony with their feelings, the Fourth Book of the Æneid, which, as every one knows, treats of the love of Dido and Æneas.

"Ah," said Gaston, opening his window and fastening the book to the string, "it seems that I have become the postman."

Then he sighed deeply, remembering that he had no means of corresponding with Hélène, and that the poor child was entirely ignorant of what had happened to him. This gave him sympathy for the attachment of Mademoiselle de Launay and the Chevalier Dumesnil. He returned to the chimney. "Monsieur," said he, "your answer is despatched."

"A thousand thanks, Chevalier. Now a word more, and I will leave you to sleep in peace."

"Oh, say whatever you wish, Monsieur."

"Have you spoken with the prisoner below?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"The Marquis de Pompadour."

"I thought so. What did he say?"

"'Good-evening,' and asked who I was; he had no time to ask more. The method of communication is not as expeditious as it is ingenious."

"You must make a hole, and then you can talk as we do."

"What with?"

"I will lend you my knife."

"Thank you."

"It will serve to amuse you, at least."

"Give it me."

"Here it is." And the knife, coming down the chimney, fell at Gaston's feet.

"Now shall I send back the bell?"

"Yes; for my jailers might miss it to-morrow morning, i do not want light for your conversation with our."

certainly not."

the bell, still in the form of a lantern, was up.

"Now," said the Chevalier Dumesnil, "you must have something to drink with your sweets, and I will send you a bottle of champagne."

"Thank you," said Gaston. "Do not deprive yourself of it for me; I rarely drink it."

"Then when you have made the hole, you may pass it to Pompadour, who in that respect is very different from you. Stay, here it is."

"Thank you, Chevalier."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

And the string ascended.

Gaston looked for the string at the window, and saw that it had disappeared.

"Ah," he sighed, "the Bastille would be a paradise for me if my poor Hélène were in Mademoiselle de Launay's place."

Then he resumed a conversation with Pompadour, which lasted till three in the morning, in the course of which he told him that he was going to pierce a hole, that they might have more direct communication.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A COMPANION IN THE BASTILLE.

Thus occupied, Gaston was more uneasy in mind than weary of confinement; besides, he had found another source of amusement. Mademoiselle de Launay, who obtained whatever she liked from the lieutenant, Maison-Rouge, provided only her request was accompanied by a sweet smile, had procured paper and pens; she had sent some to Dumesnil, who had shared them with Gaston, with whom he still communicated, and with Richelieu, with whom also he managed to correspond. Then Gaston formed the idea of making some verses to Hélène. On his part, the Chevalier Dumesnil made verses to Mademoiselle de Launay, who made them in return to him, — so that the Bastille was a true Parnassus. There was only Richelieu who dishonored the society by writing prose; and he, by every possible means, wrote to his friends and his mistresses. And thus time passed, as it will pass even in the Bastille.

Gaston had been asked if he would like to attend Mass, and as he was deeply religious, he had assented most gladly. The day after that on which the proposal had been made he was sent for.

The Mass was celebrated in a little church, having, instead of chapels, separate closets with bull's-eye windows into the choir, so that the prisoners could see the officiating only at the moment of the elevation, and he could see the prisoners at all. Gaston saw there Monsieur

de Laval and the Duc de Richelieu, who had apparently come to Mass for the purpose of talking, for they knelt side by side, and kept up an incessant whispering. Monsieur de Laval appeared to have important news to communicate to the duke, who from time to time glanced at Gaston as though he were interested in it. As neither spoke to him, however, except in the way of mere salutation, he asked no questions.

When the Mass was over, the prisoners were taken back. As they crossed a dark corridor, Gaston passed a man who seemed to be an employé of the house. This man sought Gaston's hand, and slipped a paper into it, which he put quietly into his waistcoat pocket. When he was alone in his own room he eagerly took it out. It was written on sugar paper, with the point of a sharpened coal, and contained this single line: —

"Feign illness from ennui."

It seemed to Gaston that the writing was not unknown to him, but the words were so roughly traced that they served but poorly to guide his memory. He gradually dismissed that idea, and waited for the evening impatiently, that he might consult with the Chevalier Dumesnil. When it was night again he made the usual signal; the chevalier responded, and Gaston related to him what had occurred. He asked Dumesnil, whose acquaintance with the Bastille was of long continuance, what he thought of the advice of his unknown correspondent.

"Upon my word," replied the chevalier, "though I do not understand the advice, I should follow it, for it cannot hurt you; the worst that can happen is that they may give you less to eat."

"But," said Gaston, "suppose they discover the illness to be feigned?"

"Oh, as to that," replied Dumesnil, "there is no danger; the doctor is entirely ignorant of medicine, and will give you whatever you may ask for. Perhaps they will let you walk in the garden, and that would be a great amusement."

Gaston consulted Mademoiselle de Launay, whose advice, by logic or sympathy, was the same as that of the chevalier; but she added, — "If they diet you, let me know, and I will send you chicken, sweets, and Bordeaux."

As to Pompadour, he was not consulted; the hole was not yet pierced.

Gaston then played the sick man, eating nothing of what they sent him, and living on his neighbor's generosity. At the end of the second day, Monsieur de Launay appeared; he had been told that for forty hours Gaston had eaten nothing. He found the prisoner in bed.

"Monsieur," said the governor, "I understand you are suffering, and have come myself to inquire about your health."

"You are too good, Monsieur," said Gaston; "it is true that I am suffering."

"What is the matter?"

"Faith, Monsieur, I suppose you take no special pride in your establishment, and I may tell you that I am weary of the Bastille."

"What, in four or five days?"

"From the first hour."

"And what kind of weariness do you feel?"

"Are there several kinds?"

"Certainly, — one pines for his family."

"I have none."

"For his mistress."

Gaston sighed.

"For his country."

"Yes," said Gaston, "it is that," seeing that he must pine for something.

The governor appeared to reflect. "Monsieur," said he, "since I have been governor of the Bastille, my only agreeable moments have been those in which I have been of service to the gentlemen confided to my care by the king. I am ready to do something for you, if you will promise to be reasonable."

"I promise you, Monsieur."

"I can put you in communication with one of your compatriots, or at least with a man who seems to know Bretagne perfectly."

"Is he a prisoner?"

"Like yourself."

A vague notion passed through Gaston's mind that it must be this man who had slipped the note into his hand. "I should be very grateful if you would do this," said he.

"Well, to-morrow you shall see him. But as I am recommended to be strict with him, you can remain with him only an hour; and as he is not allowed to leave his chamber, you must go to him."

"As you please, Monsieur," said Gaston.

"Then it is decided; at five o'clock to-morrow expect me or the major, — but it is on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That while looking forward to this diversion of to-morrow, you will eat a little to-day."

"I will do what I can."

Gaston ate a little chicken and drank a little wine to keep his promise. In the evening he told Dumesnil what had taken place.

"Upon my soul," said the latter, "you are lucky; the Count de Laval had the same idea, and all he gained by it was to be put into a room in the tower Du Trésor,

where he said he was bored almost to death, and had no amusement but talking with the prison apothecary."

"*Diable!*" said Gaston, "why did you not tell me that before?"

"I had forgotten it."

This tardy reminiscence somewhat troubled Gaston. Placed as he was in relation to Pompadour, Dumesnil, and Mademoiselle de Launay, his position, except for his anxiety as to his fate, and especially as to Hélène's, was tolerable; if he were to be removed he would really be attacked by the malady he had feigned.

At the appointed time the major of the Bastille came, and led Gaston across several courts, and they stopped at the tower Du Trésor. Every tower had its separate name. In the room number one was a prisoner asleep on a folding bed, with his back turned to the light; the remains of his dinner were by him on a worn-out wooden table, and his costume, torn in many places, indicated a man of low station.

"*Ouais!*" said Gaston; "do they think I am so fond of Bretagne that any fellows who happened to have been born at Rennes or at Penmarck may be raised to the rank of my Pylades? No, this fellow is too ragged, and seems to eat too much; but as one must not be too capricious in prison, let us make use of the hour. I will recount my adventure to Mademoiselle de Launay, and she will put it into verse for the Chevalier Dumesnil."

Gaston was now alone with the prisoner, who yawned and turned in his bed.

"Ugh! how cold it is in this cursed Bastille!" said he, rubbing his nose.

"That voice, that gesture, — it is he!" said Gaston, and he approached the bed.

"What!" cried the prisoner, sitting up, and looking at

Gaston with an air of astonishment; "you here, Monsieur de Chanlay!"

"Captain la Jonquière!" cried Gaston.

"Myself, — that is to say, no; I am no longer what you have called me, — I have changed my name since we met."

"To what?"

"Première Trésor."

"What do you mean?"

"Première Trésor. It is a custom in the Bastille for the prisoner to take the name of his room, — that saves the turnkeys the trouble of remembering names which they have no need to know, and which it might be dangerous for them not to forget. However, if the Bastille be full, and two or three prisoners in the same room, they take two numbers, — for example, I am Première Trésor; if you were put here you would be Première Trésor, bis; if they should put his Excellency in with us he would be Première Trésor, ter, and so on."

"Yes, I understand," said Gaston, watching La Jonquière intently; "then you are a prisoner?"

"*Parbleu!* you see for yourself; I presume we are neither of us here for pleasure."

"Then we are discovered?"

"I am afraid so."

"Thanks to you!"

"How to me?" cried La Jonquière, feigning the most profound astonishment. "No jokes, I beg."

"You have made revelations, traitor!"

"I! Come, come, young man, you are mad; you ought not to be in the Bastille, but in the Petites-Maisons."

"Do not deny it; Monsieur d'Argenson told me!"

"D'Argenson! *Pardieu*, the authority is good; and do you know what he told me?"

"No."

"That you had denounced me."

"Monsieur!"

"Well; what then? Are we to cut each other's throats because the police has followed out its trade and lied?"

"But how, then, could he discover —"

"I ask the same of you. But one thing is certain; if I had told anything I should not be here. You have not seen much of me, but you ought to know that I should not be fool enough to give information gratis; revelations are bought and sold, Monsieur, and I know that Dubois pays high for them."

"Perhaps you are right," said Gaston; "but at least let us bless the chance which brings us together."

"Certainly."

"You do not appear enchanted, nevertheless."

"I am only moderately so, I confess."

"Captain!"

"Ah, Monsieur, how bad-tempered you are!"

"I?"

"Yes; you are always getting angry. I like my solitude; that does not speak."

"Monsieur!"

"Again! Come, listen. Do you believe, as you say, that chance has brought us together?"

"What should it be?"

"Some unknown scheme of our jailers, — of D'Argenson, or perhaps Dubois."

"Did you not write to me?"

"I?"

"Telling me to fain illness from ennui."

"And how should I have written? — on what? — by whom?"

Gaston reflected; and La Jonquière watched him closely.

"Then," said the captain, presently, "I think, on the contrary, that it is to you we owe the pleasure of meeting in the Bastille."

"To me, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Chevalier; you are too confiding. I give you that information for your advantage in case you leave here, and especially in case you remain here."

"Thank you."

"Have you noticed whether you were followed?"

"No."

"A conspirator should never look before, but always behind him."

Gaston confessed that he had not taken this precaution.

"And the duke," asked La Jonquière, "is he arrested?"

"I don't know; I was going to ask you."

"*Peste!* that is a disquieting matter. You took a young woman to him?"

"You know that?"

"Ah, my dear fellow, everything becomes known. Was it not, perhaps, she who betrayed us? Ah, woman, woman!"

"This was a brave girl, Monsieur; I would answer for her discretion, courage, and devotion."

"Yes, I understand, — we love her, so she is honey and gold. What an idea of a conspiracy you must have to take a woman to the chief of the plot!"

"But I told her nothing; and she could know no secrets of mine but such as she may have surprised."

"A woman has a quick eye and a sharp nose."

"And if she knew my projects as well as I do myself, I am convinced she would not have opened her mouth."

"Oh, Monsieur, without considering her natural inclination to that exercise, can we not always make a woman speak? Some one might have said to her without any

preparation, 'Your lover, Monsieur de Chanlay, is to be beheaded,' — which, indeed, is quite likely to happen, Chevalier, if you make no explanations, — and I 'll wager that she would speak out then."

"There is no danger, Monsieur; she loves me too much."

"That is the very reason, *pardieu*, that she would chatter like a magpie; and that is why we are both caged up. However, let us drop this. What do you do here?"

"Amuse myself."

"You amuse yourself! Ah, that is very good; a fine chance here for that! So you amuse yourself? And how?"

"With making verses, eating comfits, and making holes in the floor."

"Holes in the king's boards?" said La Jonquière, rubbing his nose. "Oh, oh! that is good to know. Does not Monsieur de Launay scold?"

"He does not know it; besides, I am not the only one; everybody makes a hole in something, — one in his floor, another in his chimney, another in his wall. Do you not make holes in something?"

La Jonquière looked sharply at Gaston to see if he were not laughing at him. "I will tell you that later," said he. "But now, Monsieur, let us speak seriously. Are you condemned to death?"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"You say that coolly!"

"It is a habit in the Bastille. There are twenty here condemned to death, and not a bit the worse for it."

"I have been interrogated."

"Ah, you see!"

"But I do not believe I am condemned."

"That will come."

"My dear Captain, do you know that, although you do not look so, you are marvellously merry?"

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"And that astonishes you?"

"I did not know you were so brave."

"Then you would regret life?"

"I confess it; I only want one thing to make me happy, and that is to live."

"And you became a conspirator with a chance of happiness before you? I do not understand you; I thought people conspired only through despair, as they marry when they have no other resource."

"When I joined the conspiracy I did not love."

"And afterwards?"

"I would not draw back."

"Bravo! that is what I call character. Have you been tortured?"

"No; but I had a narrow escape."

"Then you will be."

"Why so?"

"Because I have been; and it would be unfair to treat us differently. Look at the state of my clothes."

"Which did they give you?" asked Gaston, shuddering at the recollection of what had taken place between D'Argenson and himself.

"The water. They made me drink a barrel and a half; my stomach was like a bladder. I had no idea that a man's stomach would hold so much without bursting."

"And did you suffer much?" asked Gaston, with an interest mingled with anxiety.

"Yes; but my constitution is robust. The next day I thought no more of it. It is true that since then I have drunk a great deal of wine. If you have to choose, select

the water, — it cleans. All the mixtures doctors give us are only a means of making us swallow water. Fagon says the best doctor he ever heard of was Doctor Sangrado. Unfortunately he never existed, except in the brain of Cervantes; but for that he would have done wonders."

"You know Fagon?" asked Gaston, surprised.

"By reputation; besides, I have read his works. But do you intend to persist in saying nothing?"

"Certainly."

"You are right. I should tell you, if you regret life so much as you say, to whisper a few words to D'Argenson. But he is a talker; he would reveal your confession."

"I will not speak, be assured; there are points on which I do not need strengthening."

"I believe it, *pardieu!* You seem to live in your tower the life of Sardanapalus. As for me, I have in mine only Monsieur le Comte de Laval, who takes three clysters a day, — it is an amusement he has invented. Eh, *mon Dieu!* tastes are very odd in prison. And besides, perhaps the worthy man wishes to prepare himself for the torture by water."

"But did you not say I should certainly be condemned?"

"Do you wish to know the whole truth?"

"Yes."

"Well, D'Argenson told me that you were."

Gaston turned pale. However brave one may be, an announcement like that always causes some emotion. La Jonquière noticed the expression of his face, fleeting though it was. "And yet," said he, "I believe you might save yourself if you would speak out."

"Why do you wish me to do what you yourself have refused to do?"

"Our characters and our positions are different. I am

no longer young; I am not in love; I do not leave a mistress in tears."

Gaston sighed.

"You see, — there is a great difference between us; when did you ever hear me sigh like that?"

"Ah, if I die, his Excellency will take care of Hélène."

"And if he be arrested?"

"You are right."

"Then — "

"God will protect her."

La Jonquière rubbed his nose. "Decidedly you are young," said he.

"Explain."

"Suppose his Excellency be not arrested."

"Well?"

"How old is his Excellency?"

"Forty-five or forty-six, I suppose."

"And if he fell in love with Hélène, — is not that her name?"

"The duke fall in love with her, — he to whose protection I confided her! It would be infamous!"

"The world is full of infamy; that is how it gets on."

"Oh, I will not dwell on such a thought!"

"I do not tell you to dwell on it," said La Jonquière, with his devilish smile. "I give it to you, that 's all; do with it what you please."

"Hush," said Gaston; "some one is coming."

"Have you, then, asked for anything?"

"No."

"Then the time allowed for your visit has expired," and La Jonquière threw himself quickly on his bed.

The bolts creaked, the door opened, and the governor appeared.

"Well, Monsieur," said he to Gaston; "is your companion agreeable to you?"

"Yes, Monsieur," Gaston replied; "and the more so because I happen to be acquainted with Captain la Jonquière."

"That makes my task more delicate; however, I made you an offer, and I will not draw back. I will permit one visit daily, at any hour you please; shall it be in the morning or in the evening?"

Gaston, uncertain what reply to make, looked at La Jonquière.

"Say five in the evening," said La Jonquière, quickly, in a low tone.

"In the evening at five o'clock, Monsieur, if you please," said Gaston.

"The same as to-day, then?"

"Yes."

"It shall be as you desire, Monsieur."

Gaston and La Jonquière exchanged a significant glance, and the chevalier was taken back to his chamber.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE SENTENCE.

It was half-past six, and quite dark; the chevalier's first act on being left in his room was to run to the chimney.

"Chevalier!" said he.

Dumesnil replied.

"I have paid my visit."

"Well?"

"I have found an acquaintance, if not a friend."

"A new prisoner?"

"Of the same date as myself."

"His name?"

"Captain la Jonquière."

"Ah!"

"Do you know him?"

"To be sure I do."

"Then do me a favor; who is he?"

"Oh, a furious enemy of the regent's."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am! He was in our conspiracy, and withdrew from it only because we preferred abduction to assassination."

"Then he was —"

"For assassination."

"That is the man," murmured Gaston. "He is, then," he said aloud, "a man to be trusted?"

"If he is the man of whom I have heard, and who lives in the Rue Bourdonnais, at the Muid d'Amour."

"Precisely; it is the same."

"Then he may be trusted."

"That is good," said Gaston, "for he holds in his hands the lives of four brave gentlemen."

"Of whom you are one?"

"No, I put myself aside; for it seems all is over with me."

"How, all is over?"

"Yes; I am condemned."

"To what?"

"To death."

There was a moment's silence.

"Impossible!" cried the Chevalier Dumesnil, at length.

"Why impossible?"

"Because, if I am not mistaken, your affair is attached to ours, — is it not?"

"It follows on it."

"Well —"

"Well?"

"Our affairs prospering, yours cannot go wrong."

"And who says you are prospering?"

"Listen, for with you I will have no secrets."

"I am listening."

"Mademoiselle de Launay wrote me this yesterday. She was walking with Maison-Rouge, who, as you know, is in love with her, and at whom we both laugh, but who is useful to us. On pretext of illness, she asked, as you did, for a doctor; he told her that the prison doctor was at her orders. I must tell you that we have known this doctor intimately; his name is Herment.

"However, she did not hope to get much out of him, for he is a timid man; but when he entered the garden, where she was walking, and gave her a consultation in the open air, he said to her, 'Hope!' In the mouth of

any one else this would mean nothing; in his it means a great deal. Now, since we are told to hope, you have nothing to fear, as our affairs are intimately connected."

"However," said Gaston, "La Jonquière seemed sure of what he said."

At this moment Pompadour knocked with his broom-handle.

"Your pardon," said Gaston to Dumesnil; "the marquis is calling me; perhaps he has news for me," and he went to the hole, which, by using his knife, he soon made more serviceable.

"Ask the Chevalier Dumesnil," said Pompadour, "if he has received any news from Mademoiselle de Launay."

"About what?"

"One of us. I overheard some words between the governor and the major at my door; they were, 'condemned to death.'"

Gaston shuddered. "Be easy, Marquis," said he; "I have every reason to believe they spoke of me."

"*Diable!* my dear Chevalier, that would not make me easy at all: first, because we have quickly become friends, and I should be grieved if anything were to happen to you; and, secondly, because what happened to you might well happen to us, our affairs being so similar."

"And you think that Mademoiselle de Launay could remove your doubts?"

"Yes; her windows look on the arsenal."

"Well?"

"She would have seen if there were anything new going on there to-day."

"Ah, she is knocking now!"

At that moment Mademoiselle de Launay struck two blows, which meant "Attention!" Gaston replied by one blow, which meant that he was listening. Then he

went to the window. A minute after, the string appeared with a letter. Gaston took the letter, went to the hole, and called Pompadour.

"Well?" said the marquis.

"A letter," replied Gaston.

"What does she say?"

"I don't know; but I will send it to Dumesnil, who will tell me."

"Make haste."

"*Pardieu!*" said Gaston, "you may be sure that I am as anxious as you can be;" and he ran to the chimney.

"The string!" he cried.

"You have a letter?" asked Dumesnil.

"Yes; have you a light?"

"Yes."

"Lower the string."

"Here it is."

Gaston tied on the letter, which was immediately drawn up.

"It is not for me; it is for you," said Dumesnil.

"Never mind, read it, and tell me what it is; I have no light, and you would lose time in sending me one."

"You permit me?"

"Certainly."

There was a moment's silence.

"Well?" said Gaston.

"*Diable!*" replied Dumesnil.

"Bad news, is it not?"

"Judge for yourself." And Dumesnil read:—

My dear Neighbor, — Some judges extraordinary have arrived at the arsenal this evening. I recognized D'Argenson's livery. We shall know more soon, when I see the doctor. A thousand remembrances to Dumesnil.

"It is as La Jonquière told me," said Gaston. "Judges extraordinary! It is I whom they have judged."

"Bah, Chevalier!" said Dumesnil, in a tone which he vainly tried to make reassuring; "I think that you are too easily alarmed."

"Not at all. I know well what to think, and then — hark!"

"What is it?"

"Silence! some one is coming." And Gaston went away from the chimney.

The door opened, and the major and lieutenant, with four soldiers, came seeking Gaston. He took advantage of the light they carried to arrange his toilet hastily, and then followed them, as on the former occasion. They placed him in a carriage which was closely shut, — an unnecessary precaution, since, as he passed by, all the soldiers and guards turned toward the wall; this was a custom at the Bastille. D'Argenson's face was impenetrable as usual, and the manner of his assistants was not reassuring.

"I am lost," murmured Gaston. "Poor Hélène!" And he raised his head with the intrepidity of a brave man who knowing death is near goes boldly to meet it.

"Monsieur," said D'Argenson, "your crime has been examined by the tribunal of which I am the president. In the preceding sittings you were permitted to defend yourself; if you were not granted an advocate, it was not with the intention of prejudicing your defence, but, on the contrary, because it was useless to make known the extreme indulgence toward you of a tribunal charged to be severe."

"I do not understand you, Monsieur," said Gaston.

"Then I will be more explicit. Discussion would have made one thing evident, even in the eyes of your defender, — that you are a conspirator and an assassin. How could

you suppose that with these points established indulgence would be shown you. But here you are before us; every facility will be given for your justification. If you ask a delay, you shall have it. If you wish researches, they shall be made. If you speak, you have the opportunity, and it will not be taken from you."

"I understand, and thank the tribunal for this kindness," replied Gaston. "The excuse it gives me for the absence of a defender seems sufficient. I have no defence to make."

"Then you do not wish for witnesses, delays, or documents?"

"I wish my sentence, — that is all."

"Do not be obstinate, Chevalier; confess."

"I have no confession to make; for, remember, in all my examinations you have not made one definite charge."

"And you wish for one?"

"Certainly; I should like to know of what I am accused."

"I will tell you. You came to Paris, appointed by the republican committee of Nantes to assassinate the regent. You were sent to one La Jonquière, your accomplice, now condemned with you."

Gaston felt that he turned pale, for these allegations were true. "This might be, Monsieur," said he, "but you could not know it. A man who wishes to commit such a deed does not confess it till it be accomplished."

"No; but his accomplices confess for him."

"That is to say, that La Jonquière denounces me."

"I do not refer to La Jonquière, but the others."

"The others!" cried Gaston; "are there, then, others arrested besides La Jonquière and myself?"

"Yes, — Messieurs de Pontcalec, de Talhouet, du Couëdic, and de Montlouis."

"I do not understand," said Gaston, with a vague feeling of terror, — not for himself, but for his friends.

"What! Do you not understand that Messieurs de Pontcalec, de Talhouet, du Couëdic, and de Montlouis are now being tried at Nantes?"

"Arrested!" cried Gaston, "impossible!"

"Yes," said D'Argenson; "you thought that the province would revolt rather than allow its defenders — as you rebels call yourselves — to be arrested. Well, the province has said nothing. The province has gone on singing, laughing, and dancing, and is already asking where they will be beheaded, in order to hire windows."

"I do not believe you, Monsieur," said Gaston, coldly.

"Give me that portfolio," said D'Argenson, to a man standing behind him. "Here, Monsieur," continued he, taking, one after another, several papers from the portfolio, "are the writs of arrest. Here are the reports of examinations. Do you doubt these authentic proofs?"

"All that does not show me, Monsieur, that they have accused me."

"They told all we wanted to know, and your culpability is clearly established by their answers."

"In that case, if they have told all you want to know, you have no need of my confession."

"Is that your final answer?"

"Yes."

"Clerk, read the sentence."

The clerk unrolled a paper and read with a nasal twang, in the same tone in which he would have read of any ordinary transaction: —

"Since it is proved by the investigation begun on the 19th of February that Monsieur Gaston de Chanlay came from Nantes to Paris with the intention of committing the crime of murder on the person of his Royal Highness Monseigneur the

Regent of France, which was to have been followed by a revolt against the authority of the king, the extraordinary commission instituted to inquire into this crime has adjudged the Chevalier de Chanlay worthy of the punishment reserved for those guilty of high treason, the person of the regent being as inviolable as that of the king. And therefore we order that the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay be degraded from all his titles and dignities; that he and his posterity be declared ignoble in perpetuity; that his goods be confiscated; his woods cut down to the height of six feet from the ground; and he himself beheaded on the Grève, or wheresoever it shall please the provost to appoint, saving his Majesty's pardon."

Gaston listened to this with the paleness, but also with the immobility, of a marble statue. "And when am I to be executed?" he asked.

"As soon as it may please his Majesty."

Gaston felt a throbbing in his temples and a cloud seemed to pass before his eyes. His ideas became confused and he remained silent, lest he should say something unworthy of him. But if this disturbance was acute, it was of short duration; by degrees the serenity of his bearing returned, the blood came back to his cheeks, and a contemptuous smile settled on his lips.

"It is well, Monsieur," said he; "at whatever moment his Majesty's order may arrive, it will find me prepared; but I wish to know whether before I die I may be permitted to see some persons who are very dear to me, and to ask a favor of the king."

D'Argenson's eyes glistened with malignant joy. "Monsieur," said he, "I told you that you would be treated with indulgence. You might therefore have spoken sooner, and perhaps his Highness's kindness would not have waited for a petition."

"You mistake me, Monsieur," said Gaston, with dig-

nity; "I have no favor to ask of his Majesty but one which will cast no shadow either on my glory or on his."

"You might put the king's glory before your own, Monsieur," said one of the assistants, in a cavilling tone.

"Monsieur," replied Gaston, "I am about to die; my glory will begin sooner than will his Majesty's."

"What would you ask?" said D'Argenson; "speak, and I will tell you at once if there is a chance that your request may be granted."

"I ask, first, that my titles and dignities — which are not very great — may not be cancelled. I have no posterity; I am alone in the world; my name only survives me; but as that name is only noble, and not illustrious, it will not long survive."

"This is quite a royal favor, Monsieur. His Majesty alone can reply to it, and his Majesty will reply. Is that all you desire, Monsieur?"

"No; I have another request to make, but I do not know to whom I should apply."

"First to me, Monsieur; then, in my character of lieutenant of police, I will see if I can grant it, or if I must refer it to his Majesty."

"Well, then, Monsieur, I desire to see Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny, ward of his Excellency the Duc d'Olivarès, and also the duke himself."

D'Argenson, at this request, made a movement which Gaston interpreted as one of hesitation. "Monsieur," said he, "I would see them in any place, and for as short a time as may be thought advisable."

"Very well, Monsieur, you shall see them," said D'Argenson.

"Ah, Monsieur!" said Gaston, stepping forward as though to take his hand, "you fill me with joy."

"On one condition, however, Monsieur."

"What is it? There is no condition compatible with my honor that I will not accept in exchange for so great a favor."

"You must tell no one of your condemnation, — and this on your word as a gentleman."

"I accede to that all the more willingly," said Gaston, "as one of the persons named would certainly die on being apprised of it."

"Then all goes well; have you anything further to say?"

"Nothing, Monsieur, except to beg that you will bear me witness that I have divulged nothing."

"Your refusals to answer are already written in the reports. Clerk, hand the papers to Monsieur de Chanlay, that he may read and sign them."

Gaston sat down by a table, and while D'Argenson and the judges, grouped around him, conversed among themselves, he carefully perused the papers, examining with special attention the report of his answers to the interrogatories. "Monsieur," said he, "here are the documents. Shall I have the honor of seeing you again?"

"I do not think so," said D'Argenson, with that brutality which made him a bugbear to prisoners and those condemned.

"Then to our meeting in another world, Monsieur."

D'Argenson bowed and made the sign of the cross, according to the custom of judges in taking leave of a man whom they have condemned to death. Then the major took possession of Gaston, and led him back to his room.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A FAMILY FEUD.

When Gaston returned to his room, he was obliged to answer the questions of Dumesnil and Pompadour, who were waiting to hear news from him; but, in compliance with his promise made to D'Argenson, he did not mention his sentence, but simply announced a severer examination than those that had preceded. Since he wished to write some letters before going to his death, he asked Dumesnil for a light. As to paper and pencil, it will be remembered that he had procured them from the governor for drawing. This time Dumesnil sent him a lighted candle. It will be seen that things were progressing. Maison-Rouge could refuse nothing to Mademoiselle de Launay, and she shared all with Dumesnil, who, in his turn, again shared with his neighbors, Gaston and Richelieu.

Gaston doubted whether, in spite of D'Argenson's promise, he would be allowed to see Hélène, but he knew that at least he should see a priest before he died; there could be no doubt that the priest would forward two letters for him.

As he began to write, Mademoiselle de Launay made a signal that she had something to send him; it was a letter. Gaston read: —

Our Friend, — for you are our friend, and now we have no secrets from you, — tell Dumesnil of the famous hope I conceived after the word that Herment said to me.

Gaston's heart beat. Might not he also find in this letter some ground for hope? Had they not said that his fate could not be separated from that of the Cellamare conspirators? It is true that those who had said so did not know the full extent of his purposes. He continued reading: —

An hour ago the doctor came, accompanied by Maison-Rouge. From the latter's manner I drew the most favorable augury; however, when I asked for an opportunity to speak with the doctor in private, or, at least, to be permitted to converse with him in a low tone, he made some difficulties, which I removed with a smile. "At any rate," said he "no one must know that I am out of hearing. I should lose my place if it were known how weak I am." This tone of love and interest combined seemed to me so grotesque that I laughingly promised him what he asked; you see how I keep my promise. He went to a distance, and Herment approached. Then a dialogue ensued, wherein the gestures meant one thing while the voice declared another. "You have good friends," said Herment, — "friends in high places, who are greatly interested for you." I naturally thought of Madame du Maine. "Ah, Monsieur," I cried, "have you anything for me?" "Hush!" said Herment. Judge how my heart beat.

Gaston felt his own beating vigorously.

"And what have you to give me?" "Oh, nothing myself; but you will have the object agreed upon." "But what is the object? Speak!" "The beds in the Bastille are known to be bad, and particularly badly covered, and I am commissioned to offer you —" "What?" "A quilt to throw over your feet." I burst out laughing; the devotion of my friends was limited to guarding me against catching cold! "My dear Monsieur Herment," said I, "in my present position it would be better if my friends were to occupy themselves less about my feet and more about my head." "It is a female friend,"

said he. "Who is it?" "Mademoiselle de Charolais," said Herment, lowering his voice, so that I could scarcely hear him. Then he withdrew. I, my dear Chevalier, am now waiting for Mademoiselle de Charolais's quilt. Tell this to Dumesnil; it will make him laugh.

Gaston sighed. The gayety of those around him weighed heavily on his heart. It was a new torture which they had invented in forbidding him to confide his fate to any one; it seemed to him that he should have found consolation in the tears of his two neighbors. He had not the courage to read the letter to Dumesnil, so he passed it on to him, and a moment after heard his shouts of laughter. At that moment Gaston was saying adieu to Hélène. After spending a part of the night in writing, he slept; at five-and-twenty one must sleep, even though he is about to sink into the sleep that is without end.

In the morning Gaston's breakfast was brought at the usual hour, but he remarked that it was more appetizing than was customary. He smiled at this attention, and recalled the cares bestowed, as he had heard, on persons condemned to death. When he had nearly finished his breakfast the governor entered. Gaston with a rapid glance interrogated his expression, which was calm and courteous as ever. Was he, then, ignorant of the sentence, or was he wearing a mask?

"Monsieur," said the governor, "will you take the trouble to descend to the council-chamber?"

Gaston rose. He heard a sort of buzzing in his ears; for to a man condemned to death every injunction which he does not understand seems a step toward the end. "May I know the reason, Monsieur?" he asked, in so calm a tone that it was impossible to detect his real emotion.

"To receive a visit," replied the governor. "Yester

day, after the examination, did you not ask the lieutenant of police to be allowed to see some one?"

Gaston started. "And is it that person?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur."

Gaston had asked that he might see two persons, — the governor announced but one. Which one was it? He had not the courage to ask, and silently followed his conductor.

De Launay led Gaston to the council-chamber; on entering, he cast an eager glance around, but the room was empty. "Remain here, Monsieur; the person whom you expect will come," said the governor, who then bowed and went out.

Gaston ran to the window, which was barred, and looked out, — there was a sentinel before it. The door opened, and Gaston, turning round, faced the Duc d'Olivarès. This was not all he had expected, and yet it was a great boon; for if they had kept their promise to him in regard to the duke, there was no reason why they should fail of their promise in regard to Hélène. "Ah, Monsieur," he exclaimed, "how good of you to come at the request of a poor prisoner!"

"It was a duty," replied the duke; "besides I had to thank you."

"Me!" said Gaston, astonished; "what have I done to merit your Excellency's thanks?"

"You have been interrogated, taken to the torture-chamber, given to understand that you might save yourself by naming your accomplices, and yet you kept silence."

"I made an engagement and kept it; that does not deserve any thanks, Monseigneur."

"And now, Monsieur, tell me if I can serve you in anything."

"First of all, reassure me concerning yourself; have you been molested, Monseigneur?"

"Not at all; and if all the Bretons are as discreet as you, I am satisfied that my name will never be mentioned in these unfortunate debates."

"Oh, I will answer for them as for myself, Monseigneur. But can you be sure of La Jonquière?"

"La Jonquière!" repeated the duke, embarrassed.

"Yes; do you not know that he is arrested?"

"Yes; I heard something of it."

"Well, I ask you, Monseigneur, what you think of him?"

"I can tell you nothing, except that he has my confidence."

"If so, he must be worthy of it, Monseigneur. That is all I wished to know."

"Then come to the request you had to make."

"Have you seen the young girl I brought to your house?"

"Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny? Yes, Monsieur, I have seen her."

"Well, Monsieur, what I had not time to tell you then, I will tell you now. I have loved that young girl for a year. The dream of that year has been to consecrate my life to her happiness. I say the dream, Monseigneur; for on awaking I saw that all hope of happiness was denied me. And yet to give this young girl a name, a position, a fortune, at the moment of my arrest, I was about to make her my wife."

"Without the knowledge of her parents or the consent of her family?" cried the duke.

"She had neither, Monseigneur; and she was probably about to be sold to some nobleman when she left the person who had been set to watch her."

"But what made you think that Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny was to be the victim of a shameful bargain?"

"What she herself told me of a pretended father, who concealed himself, of diamonds which had been offered to her. Then, do you know where I found her, Monseigneur? In one of those houses devoted to the pleasures of our *roués*, — that angel of innocence and purity! In short, Monseigneur, this young girl fled with me, in spite of the cries of her duenna, in broad daylight, and in the face of the servants who surrounded her. She stayed two hours alone with me; and though she is as pure as on the day when she received her mother's first kiss, she is not the less compromised by those two hours. Well, Monseigneur, I wish this projected marriage to take place."

"In your situation, Monsieur?"

"A reason the more, Monseigneur."

"But perhaps you may deceive yourself as to the punishment reserved for you."

"It is probably the same which, under similar circumstances, was inflicted on the Comte de Chalais, the Marquis de Cinq-Mars, and the Chevalier Louis de Rohan."

"Then you are prepared even for death, Monsieur?"

"I prepared for it from the day I joined the conspiracy. The conspirator's only excuse is that while robbing others of their lives, he risks his own."

"And what will this young girl gain by the marriage?"

"Monseigneur, though not rich, I have some fortune, — she is poor; I have a name, and she has none. I would leave her my name and fortune; and with that intention I have already petitioned the king that my goods may not be confiscated, nor my name declared infamous. When it is known for what reason I make these two requests they doubtless will be granted. If I die without making her my wife, she will be supposed to be my mistress, and

will be dishonored, lost, and there will be no future for her. If, on the contrary, by your protection, or that of your friends, — and that protection I earnestly implore, — we are united, no one can reproach her. The blood which flows on the scaffold for a political offence does not disgrace a family, — no shame will fall on my widow; and if she cannot be happy, she will at least be independent and respected. This is the favor which I have to ask, Monseigneur; is it in your power to obtain it for me?"

The duke went to the door and struck three blows. The door opened, and Maison-Rouge appeared.

"Ask Monsieur de Launay, from me," said the duke, "whether the young girl who is at the door in my carriage may come in? Her visit, as he knows, is authorized. You will have the kindness to conduct her here."

"What, Monseigneur! Hélène is here, — at the door?"

"Were you not promised that she should come?"

"Yes; but seeing you alone, I lost all hope."

"I wished to see you first, thinking that you might have many things to say which you would not wish her to hear; for I know all, Monsieur."

"You know all! What do you mean?"

"I know that you were taken to the arsenal yesterday."

"Monseigneur!"

"I know that you found D'Argenson there, and that he read to you your sentence. I know that you are condemned to death, and that you pledged your word not to speak of it to any one."

"Oh, Monseigneur, silence! One word of this would kill Hélène."

"Be easy, Monsieur. But let us see; is there no way of avoiding this execution?"

"Days would be necessary to prepare and execute a plan of escape, and I scarcely have hours."

"I do not speak of escape; I ask if you have no excuse to give for your crime?"

"My crime!" cried Gaston, astonished to hear his accomplice use such a word.

"*Eh, mon Dieu!* yes," replied the duke, recovering himself. "You know that men stigmatize murder with this name; but posterity often judges differently, and sometimes calls that crime a grand deed."

"I have no excuse to give, Monseigneur, except that I believe the death of the regent to be necessary to the salvation of France."

"Yes," replied the duke, smiling; "but you will see that that is scarcely the excuse to offer to Philippe d'Orléans. I wanted something personal. Political enemy of the regent's as I am, I know that he is not considered a bad man. Men say that he is merciful, and that there have been no executions during his reign."

"You forget Comte de Horn."

"He was an assassin."

"And what am I?"

"There is this difference, — Comte de Horn murdered in order to rob."

"I neither can nor will ask anything of the regent," said Gaston.

"Not you, personally, I know, — but your friends. If they had a plausible pretence to offer, perhaps the prince himself might pardon you."

"I have none, Monseigneur."

"It is impossible, Monsieur, — permit me to say so. A resolution such as you have taken must proceed from a sentiment of some kind, either of hatred or vengeance. And stay, — I remember you told La Jonquière, who repeated it to me, that you had inherited a family feud; tell me the cause."

"It is useless, Monseigneur, to tire you with that; it would not interest you."

"Never mind, tell it to me."

"Well, the regent killed my brother."

"The regent killed your brother! What do you mean? It is impossible, Monsieur Gaston," exclaimed the Duc d'Olivarès.

"Yes, killed; if from the effect we go back to the cause."

"Explain yourself. How could the regent do this?"

"My brother, who being fifteen years of age when my father died, three months before my birth, stood to me in the place of that father and of my mother, who died when I was still in the cradle, — my brother loved a young girl who was brought up in a convent by the orders of the prince."

"Do you know in what convent?"

"No; I only know that it was in Paris."

The duke murmured some words which Gaston could not hear.

"My brother, a relative of the abbess, had seen this young girl, and asked her hand in marriage. The prince's consent to this union had been asked, and he made a pretence of granting it, when this young girl, seduced by her so-called protector, suddenly disappeared. For three months my brother hoped to find her, but all his searches were vain; he found no trace of her, and in despair he sought death in the battle of Ramillies."

"And what was the name of this girl?" asked the duke, eagerly.

"No one ever knew, Monseigneur; to speak her name was to dishonor it."

"No room to doubt, — it was she!" murmured the duke; "it was Hélène's mother. And your brother's name was — " added he aloud.

"Olivier de Chanlay, Monseigneur."

"Olivier de Chanlay," repeated the duke, in a low voice; "I knew the name De Chanlay was not strange to me." Then, aloud, "Continue, Monsieur; I listen to you."

"You do not know what a family hatred is in a province like ours. I had lavished upon my brother all the love which would have fallen to the share of my father and mother, and now I suddenly found myself alone in the world. I grew up in isolation of heart, and in the hope of revenge; I grew up among people who were constantly repeating, 'It was the Duc d'Orléans who killed your brother.' Then the duke became regent. At about the same time the Breton league was organized, and I was one of the first to join it. You know the rest. You see that there is nothing in all this which has any interest for your Excellency."

"You mistake, Monsieur; unfortunately, the regent has to reproach himself with many such faults."

"You see, therefore," said Gaston, "that my destiny must be accomplished, and that I can ask nothing of that man."

"You are right, Monsieur; whatever is done must be done without you."

At this moment the door opened and Maison-Rouge appeared.

"Well, Monsieur?" asked the duke.

"The governor has an order from the lieutenant of police to admit Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny. Shall I bring her here?"

"Monseigneur —" said Gaston, looking at the duke with an air of entreaty.

"Yes, Monsieur," said the latter, "I understand, — grief and love do not need witnesses; I will come back for Mademoiselle Hélène."

"The permission is for half an hour only," said Maison-Rouge.

"Then at the end of that time I will return," said the duke, and bowing to Gaston, he went out. Maison-Rouge examined the doors of the chamber, assured himself that the sentinels were still at the windows, and in his turn went out.

An instant after the door opened again, and Hélène appeared, trembling, and stammering thanks and questions to the lieutenant of the Bastille, who saluted her politely, and withdrew without replying.

Hélène looked round and saw Gaston; they ran to each other, and for a few minutes all their sorrows were forgotten in a close and passionate embrace.

"At last!" cried Hélène, her face bathed in tears.

"Yes, at last!" repeated Gaston.

"Alas! to see you here, in prison," murmured Hélène, looking around with an air of terror, "here, where I dare not speak freely, where we may be watched, overheard, perhaps."

"Do not complain, Hélène, for an exception is made in our favor. A prisoner is never allowed to press to his heart those who are dear to him. Ordinarily, Hélène, the visitor stands yonder against the wall, the prisoner at the other end of the chamber, a soldier is placed between them, and the subject of the conversation is appointed in advance."

"To whom do we owe this favor?"

"Doubtless to the regent; for yesterday, when I asked permission of Monsieur d'Argenson, he said that it was beyond his power to grant, and that he must refer it to the regent."

"But now that I see you again, Gaston, tell me all that has occurred in this age of tears and suffering.

Ah, tell me; my presentiments did not deceive me, then, — you were conspiring! Oh, do not deny it, — I know it."

"Yes; Hélène, you know that we Bretons are as constant in hatred as we are in love. A league was organized in Bretagne in which all our nobles took part. Ought I to act differently from my brothers? I ask you, Hélène, ought I, — could I? Would you not have despised me if, when you had seen all Bretagne under arms, I alone had been inactive, — a whip in my hand while others held the sword?"

"Oh, yes; you are right, Gaston. But why did you not remain in Bretagne with the others?"

"The others are arrested also, Hélène."

"Then you have been denounced — betrayed?"

"Probably. But sit down, Hélène; now that we are alone, let me look at you, and tell you that you are beautiful, that I love you. How have you been in my absence? The duke — "

"Oh, if you only knew how good he is to me; every evening he comes to see me, and his care and attention — "

"And," said Gaston, who thought of the suggestion of the false La Jonquière, "nothing suspicious in those attentions?"

"What do you mean, Gaston?"

"That the duke is still young, and that, as I told you just now, you are beautiful."

"Oh, Heaven! no, Gaston; this time there is not a shadow of doubt. And when he was there near me — as near as you are now — there were moments when it seemed as if I had found my father."

"Poor child!"

"Yes, by a strange chance, for which I cannot account, there is a resemblance between the duke's voice and that

of the man who came to see me at Rambouillet, — it struck me at once."

"You think so?" said Gaston, in a preoccupied manner.

"What are you thinking of, Gaston?" asked Hélène; "you seem scarcely to hear what I am saying to you."

"Hélène, every word you speak goes to the inmost depth of my heart."

"No, you are anxious. Oh, Gaston, I understand it. To conspire is to stake your life. But be assured, Gaston: I have told the duke that if you die I shall die too."

Gaston started. "Angel that you are!" said he.

"O my God!" cried poor Hélène, "how horrible to know that the man I love is exposed to danger, — the more terrible because unknown; to feel that I am powerless to aid him, and that I can only shed useless tears when I would give my life to save him."

Gaston's face was lighted by a flash of joy; it was the first time that he had ever heard such words from the lips of his beloved. Under the influence of an idea which had been occupying him for some minutes, "Yes, my Hélène," said he, taking her hand, "you can do much for me."

"What can I do?"

"You can consent to become my wife."

Hélène started. "I your wife, Gaston?" she cried.

"Yes, Hélène; this plan, formed in our liberty, may be executed in my captivity. Hélène, my wife before God and man, in this world and the next, for time and for eternity! In one word, that is what you can become for me, Hélène; do you think, then, that it is nothing?"

"Gaston," said she, looking at him fixedly, "you are hiding something from me."

It was Gaston's turn to start now. "I!" said he; "what should I hide from you?"

"You told me yourself that you saw Monsieur d'Argenson yesterday."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, Gaston," said Hélène, turning pale, "you are condemned."

Gaston took a sudden resolution. "Yes," said he, "I am condemned to exile; and, egotist as I am, I would bind you to me by indissoluble ties before I leave France."

"Is that the truth, Gaston?"

"Yes; have you the courage to be the wife of a proscript, Hélène, — to condemn yourself to exile?"

"Can you ask it, Gaston?" she exclaimed, her eyes lighting with enthusiasm. "Exile! Oh, thank God! — I, who would have accepted an eternal prison with you, and have thought myself blessed, I may accompany you, I may follow you? Oh, this condemnation is indeed a joy after what we feared. All the world is ours excepting France alone. Oh, Gaston, Gaston, we shall yet be happy!"

"Yes, Hélène," said Gaston, with an effort.

"Picture my happiness!" cried Hélène. "To me France is the country where you are; your love is the only country I desire. I know I shall have to teach you to forget Bretagne, your friends, and your dreams of the future; but I will love you so much that it will be easy for you to forget them."

Gaston could do nothing but take her hands and cover them with kisses.

"Is the place of your exile fixed?" said she; "have they told you that? When do you go? We shall go together, shall we not? Oh, tell me?"

"My Hélène," replied Gaston, "it is impossible; we must be separated, — at least for a short time. I shall be taken to the frontier of France, I do not as yet know

where. Once out of the kingdom I shall be free, and then you shall rejoin me."

"Oh, better than that, Gaston, — better than that. By aid of the duke I will discover in advance the place of your exile, and instead of following you thither, I will be there to meet you. As you step from the carriage which brings you, you shall find me waiting to soften the pain of your adieux to France; and then, death alone is irretrievable. Later, the king may pardon you; later still, and the action punished to-day may be looked upon as a deed to be rewarded. Then we will return; then nothing need keep us from Bretagne, the cradle of our love, the paradise of our memories. Oh," she continued, in an accent of mingled love and impatience, "tell me, Gaston, that you share my hopes; that you are content; that you are happy."

"Oh, yes, yes, Hélène!" cried Gaston; "yes, I am happy; for now at last I know by what an angel I am beloved. Yes, Hélène, one hour of such love as yours, and then death would be better than a long life without love."

"Well!" exclaimed Hélène, her whole mind and soul earnestly fixed on the new future which was opening before her, "what will they do next? Will they let me see you again before your departure? When and how shall we meet? Can you receive my letters? Can you reply to them? At what hour to-morrow may I come?"

"They have almost promised me that our marriage shall take place this evening or to-morrow morning."

"What! here, in a prison?" said Hélène, shuddering involuntarily.

"Wherever it may be, Hélène, will it not bind me to you for the rest of my life?"

"But suppose they do not keep their promise to you;

suppose they make you set out before I have seen you?"

"Alas!" said Gaston, with a bursting heart, "that is possible, Hélène; and it is that I dread."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* do you think, then, your departure is so near?"

"You know, Hélène, that prisoners are not their own masters; officers may come at any moment to take me away."

"Oh, let them come, let them come!" cried Hélène; "the sooner you are free, the sooner we shall be reunited. It is not necessary that I should be your wife, in order to follow you, and remain with you. I know my Gaston's honor, and from this day I look upon you as my husband before God. Oh, go soon, Gaston; for while these thick and gloomy walls surround you I tremble for your life. Go, and in a week we shall be reunited, with no separation to threaten us, no spy to watch us, — reunited forever."

At that moment the door opened.

"*Mon Dieu!* already?" said Hélène.

"Mademoiselle," said the lieutenant, "the time granted for your visit has elapsed."

"Hélène," said Gaston, seizing the young girl's hand, with a nervous trembling which he could not master.

"What is it?" she cried, watching him with terror. "Good Heaven! you are as pale as marble!"

"It is nothing," said he, forcing himself to be calm; "indeed, it is nothing," and he kissed her hands, smiling.

"Till to-morrow, Gaston."

"To-morrow — yes."

The duke appeared at the door; Gaston ran to him. "Monseigneur," said he, seizing the hands of the duke, "do all in your power to obtain permission for her to

become my wife; but if that be impossible, swear to me that she shall be your daughter."

The duke pressed Gaston's hands; he was so affected that he could not speak. Hélène approached. Gaston was silent, fearing she might overhear. He held out his hand to Hélène, who presented her forehead to him, while silent tears rolled down her cheeks; Gaston closed his eyes, that the sight of her tears might not call up his own.

At length they must part. They exchanged one last lingering glance, and the duke pressed Gaston's hand. How strange was this sympathy between two men, one of whom had come so far for the sole purpose of killing the other!

The door closed, and Gaston sank down on a seat, utterly broken and exhausted. In ten minutes the governor entered; he came to conduct Gaston back to his own room. Gaston followed him silently, and when asked if there was anything he wanted, he mournfully shook his head.

At night Mademoiselle de Launay signalled that she had something to communicate. Gaston opened the window, and received a letter enclosing another. The first was for himself. He read:—

DEAR NEIGHBOR, — The quilt was not so contemptible as I supposed; it contained a little paper on which was written the word already spoken by Herment, "Hope!" It also enclosed this letter for Monsieur de Richelieu; send it to Dumesnil, who will pass it to the duke.

Your servant,

DE LAUNAY.

"Alas!" thought Gaston, with a sad smile, "they will miss me when I am gone," and he called Dumesnil, to whom he passed the letter.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### STATE AFFAIRS AND FAMILY AFFAIRS.

On leaving the Bastille, the duke took Hélène home, promising to come and see her as usual in the evening; a promise which Hélène would have estimated all the more highly if she had known that his Highness had a *bal masque* at Monceaux.

On re-entering the Palais Royal, the duke asked for Dubois, and was told he was in his study, working. The duke mounted the stairs lightly, according to his custom, and entered the apartment without allowing himself to be announced. Dubois was so busy that he did not hear the duke, who advanced on tiptoe and looked over his shoulder, to see what was occupying him so intently. He was writing down names, with notes by the side of each.

"What are you doing there, Abbé?" asked the regent.

"Ah, Monseigneur, it is you? Pardon; I did not hear you, otherwise —"

"I am not asking you about that," said the regent; "I ask you what you are doing."

"Signing the burial-tickets for our Breton friends."

"But their fate is not yet decided. You go ahead like a madman, while as yet the sentence of the commission —"

"I know what it is," said Dubois.

"Is it rendered, then?"

"No; but I dictated it before they went."

"Do you know that your conduct is odious?"

"Truly, Monseigneur, you are insupportable! Manage your family affairs, and leave state affairs to me."

"My family affairs!"

"Ah, as to those, I hope you are satisfied with me, or you would indeed be difficult to please. You recommend to me Monsieur de Chanlay, and on your recommendation I make it a rose-water Bastille to him, — sumptuous repasts, a charming governor. I let him pierce holes in your floors, and spoil your walls, — all which will cost us a great deal to repair. Since his entrance, life in the Bastille is quite a fête. Dumesnil talks all day through his chimney; Mademoiselle de Launay fishes with a line through her window; Pompadour drinks champagne. There is nothing to be said to all this, — these are your family affairs; but in Bretagne you have nothing to see, and I forbid you to look, Monseigneur, unless you have a few more unknown daughters there, — which is quite possible."

"Dubois! scoundrel!"

"Ah, you think when you have said 'Dubois,' and added 'scoundrel' to my name, you have said everything. Well, call me 'scoundrel' as much as you please; meanwhile, but for the 'scoundrel' you would have been assassinated."

"Well, what then?"

"'What then!' Hear the statesman! Well, then I should have been hanged, perhaps, — that is something, to begin with. Then, Madame de Maintenon would have become regent of France, — an excellent joke! 'What then,' indeed! To think that a philosophic prince should utter such naïvetés! Oh, Marcus Aurelius! — was it not he who said, 'Populos esse demum felices si reges philosophi forent, aut philosophi regês'? And here is an illustration!"

While saying this, Dubois continued writing.

"Dubois," said the regent, "you do not know this young man."

"What young man?"

"The chevalier."

"Really! You shall present him to me when he is your son-in-law."

"That will be to-morrow, Dubois."

The abbé turned round in astonishment, and looking at the regent with his little eyes as wide open as possible, "Ah, Monseigneur, are you mad?" he said.

"No; but he is an honorable man, and you know that such men are rare."

"'Honorable man'! Ah, Monseigneur, permit me to say that you have a strange idea of honor."

"Yes; I believe that we differ in our ideas of honor."

"What more has this honorable man done? Has he poisoned the dagger with which he meant to assassinate you? In that case there would be nothing to say; for then he would be more than an honorable man, he would be a saint. We have already Saint Jacques Clement and Saint Ravaillac; Saint Gaston is wanting in the calendar. Quick, quick, Monseigneur! You who will not ask the pope to give a cardinal's hat to your minister, ask him to canonize your assassin; and for the first time in your life you will be logical."

"Dubois, I tell you there are few men capable of doing what this young man has done."

"*Peste*, that is lucky; if there were ten in France I should certainly resign."

"I do not speak of what he wished to do, but of what he has done."

"Well, what has he done? Come, I am listening. I should like nothing better than to be edified."

"First, he kept his promise to D'Argenson."

"Oh, that of course, — the fellow is faithful to his word; and but for me would have kept his word also with Pontcalec, Talhouet, and the rest."

"Yes; but one was more difficult than the other. He had promised not to mention his sentence to any one, and he did not speak of it to his mistress."

"Nor to you?"

"He spoke of it to me, because I told him that I knew it. He forbade me to ask anything of the regent, desiring, he said, but one favor."

"And that one?"

"Permission to marry Hélène, in order to leave her a fortune and a name."

"Good, he wants to leave to your daughter a fortune and a name! Your son-in-law is considerate."

"Do you forget that this is a secret from him?"

"Who knows?"

"Dubois, I do not know in what your hands were steeped the day you were born; but I know that you sully everything you touch."

"Except conspirators, Monseigneur; for it seems to me that there, on the contrary, I purify. Look at the Cellamare party! Ha, how that matter was washed clean! Dubois here, Dubois there! I hope the apothecary properly purged France from Spain. Well, it will be the same with our Olivarès as it was with our Cellamare. There is now only Bretagne congested; a good dose, and all will be right."

"Dubois, you would joke with the Gospel."

"*Pardieu!* I began with that."

The regent rose.

"Come, Monseigneur," said Dubois, "I was wrong, — I forgot you were fasting; let us hear the end of this story.

"The end is that I promised to ask this favor from the regent, and that the regent will grant it."

"The regent will commit a folly."

"No, Monsieur; he will repair a fault."

"Ah, very good! That only was wanting, — to discover that you have a reparation to make to Monsieur de Chanlay."

"Not to him, but to his brother."

"Still better. And what have you done to his brother?"

"I took from him the woman he loved."

"Who was that?"

"Hélène's mother."

"Well, that time you were wrong; for if you had let her alone we should not have had this tiresome affair on our hands."

"But we have it, and must now get out of it as well as possible."

"Just what I am working at; and when is the marriage to take place, Monseigneur?"

"To-morrow."

"In the chapel of the Palais Royal? You will be there, dressed in the costume of a knight of the order; you will extend both hands over your son-in-law's head, — one more than he intended to extend over you. It will be very affecting."

"No, Abbé; it will not take place in just that way. They will be married in the Bastille, and I shall be in the chapel where they cannot see me."

"Well, Monseigneur, I ask permission to be there with you. It is a ceremony that I wish to see. They say that things of that sort are very moving."

"No; you would be in the way, and your ugly face would betray my incognito."

"Your handsome face is still more easy to recognize,

Monseigneur," said Dubois, bowing. "There are portraits of Henri IV. and Louis XIV. in the Bastille."

"You flatter me."

"Are you going, Monseigneur?"

"Yes; I have an appointment with De Launay."

"The governor of the Bastille?"

"Yes."

"Go, Monseigneur, go."

"By the way, shall I see you to-night at Monceaux?"

"Perhaps."

"Have you a disguise?"

"I have La Jonquière's dress."

"Oh, that is fit only for the Muid d'Amour and the Rue du Bac."

"Monseigneur forgets the Bastille, where it has had some success, — without reckoning," he added, with his monkey smile, "those successes it is yet to have."

"Well, adieu, Abbé."

"Adieu, Monseigneur."

Dubois, left alone, moved uneasily in his chair; then he became thoughtful; then he rubbed his nose; then he smiled. It was a sign that he had come to a resolution. He reached for the bell and rang. An usher entered, to whom he said: "Monsieur de Launay, the governor of the Bastille, is about to visit Monseigneur; watch for his departure, and bring him to me."

The usher bowed, and retired without a reply. Dubois resumed his work. Half an hour afterward the door opened, and the usher announced Monsieur de Launay. As De Launay entered, Dubois handed him a note. "Read that," said he; "I give you written instructions, that there may be no pretext for neglecting them."

De Launay read the note with signs of increasing con-

sternation "Ah, Monsieur," said he, when he had finished, "you wish, then, to ruin my reputation?"

"How so?"

"To-morrow when it becomes known —"

"Who will tell it? Will you?"

"No; but Monseigneur —"

"Will be enchanted; I can answer for him."

"A governor of the Bastille!"

"Do you care to retain the title?"

"Certainly."

"Then do as I tell you."

"'T is hard, however, to close one's eyes and ears."

"My dear De Launay, go and pay a visit to Dumesnil's chimney and Pompadour's ceiling."

"What are you saying, Monseigneur? Can it be possible? You speak of things of which I am entirely ignorant."

"A proof that I know better than you what goes on in the Bastille; and if I were to speak of some things you do know, you would be still more surprised, perhaps."

"What could you tell me?" asked the poor governor, quite bewildered.

"That a week ago one of the officers of the Bastille, and an important one too, received fifty thousand francs to let two women pass with —"

"Monsieur, they were —"

"I know who they were, what they went for, and what they did. They were Mademoiselle de Valois and Mademoiselle de Charolais; they went to see the Duc de Richelieu, and they ate bon-bons till midnight in the tower Du Coin, where they intend to pay another visit to-morrow, as they have to-day announced to Monsieur de Richelieu."

De Launay turned pale.

"Well," continued Dubois, "do you think if I told

these things to the regent — who is, as you know, greedy of scandal — that a certain Monsieur de Launay would continue to be governor of the Bastille? But no, I shall not breathe a word of it; for I know that men should assist one another. I assist you, Monsieur de Launay; do you, then, assist me?"

"I am at your orders, Monsieur."

"Then I shall find everything ready?"

"I promise you; but not a word to Monseigneur."

"That is right, Monsieur de Launay. Adieu!"

"Good!" said Dubois, when the governor had gone; "and now, Monseigneur, when you want to marry your daughter to-morrow, there will be only one thing missing, — and that will be your son-in-law."

At the moment when Gaston had passed on to Dumesnil Mademoiselle de Launay's letter, he heard steps in the corridor. He immediately cautioned the chevalier not to speak, struck the floor with his foot to warn Pompadour, blew out his light, and threw his coat on a chair as if he were beginning to undress. The door opened and the governor entered. Gaston looked at him with some anxiety, since this visit was at an unusual hour, and thought that he appeared to be troubled. Moreover, when the governor, who seemed to wish to remain alone with Gaston, took the lamp from his attendant and placed it on the table, the chevalier observed that his hand was trembling. The turnkeys withdrew, but the prisoner saw two soldiers at the door. A shudder ran through all his frame. These silent preparations had a funereal aspect.

"Chevalier," said the governor, "you are a man, and you told me to treat you as a man. I have to inform you that you were condemned yesterday."

"And you have come to tell me," said Gaston, who

always gained courage in the face of danger, "that the hour of my execution has come?"

"No, Monsieur, but it approaches."

"When will it be?"

"May I tell you the truth, Chevalier?"

"I shall be most grateful to you."

"To-morrow, at break of day."

"Where?"

"In the yard of the Bastille."

"Thank you; I had hoped, however, that before I died I might have been the husband of the young girl who was here yesterday."

"Did Monsieur d'Argenson promise you this?"

"No; but he promised to ask the king."

"The king may have refused."

"Does he never grant such favors?"

"'T is rare, Monsieur, but not without a precedent."

"Monsieur, I am a Christian," said Gaston, "I hope I shall be allowed a confessor."

"He is here."

"May I see him?"

"Directly; at present he is with your accomplice."

"My accomplice! Who is my accomplice?"

"Captain la Jonquière."

"Captain la Jonquière!" cried Gaston.

"He is condemned as you are, and will be executed with you."

"Unhappy man!" murmured Gaston. "And I had suspected him!"

"Chevalier, you are young to die," said the governor.

"Death does not count years, Monsieur; God bids it strike and it obeys."

"But if one can avert the blow, it is almost a crime not to do so."

"What do you mean? I do not understand."

"I mean that Monsieur d'Argenson must have left you some hope — "

"Enough, Monsieur, I have nothing to confess, and I will confess nothing."

At this moment some one knocked at the door; the governor opened it. The major was there, and exchanged a few words with Monsieur de Launay. The governor returned to Gaston, who stood with his hand on the back of a chair, pale but apparently calm.

"Monsieur," said the governor, "Captain la Jonquière wishes to see you once more."

"And you refuse it?" said Gaston, with a slight, ironical smile.

"On the contrary, I grant it, in the hope that he will be more reasonable than you, and that he wishes to consult you as to making confessions."

"If that is his intention, tell him I refuse to come."

"I know nothing of it, Monsieur; perhaps he only wishes to see once again his companion in misfortune."

"In that case, Monsieur, I consent."

"I shall have the honor to conduct you myself," said the governor, bowing.

"I am ready to follow you, Monsieur."

Monsieur de Launay took the lead, Gaston followed him, and the two soldiers who were at the door went behind Gaston. They passed through the same corridors and courts as on the former occasion, and stopped at last before the tower De Trésor. Monsieur de Launay placed the two sentinels before the door, and then ascended twelve steps, still followed by Gaston. A turnkey admitted them to La Jonquière's room. The captain was dressed in the same ragged clothes, and lay on his bed as before. Hearing his door open, he turned on his bed,

and apparently seeing only Monsieur de Launay, he immediately resumed his former position.

"I thought the almoner of the Bastille was with you, Captain," said Monsieur de Launay.

"He was, Monsieur, but I sent him away."

"Why so?"

"Because I do not like Jesuits; do you think, *morbleu*, that I cannot die properly without a priest?"

"To die properly, Monsieur, is not to die bravely, but to die as a Christian."

"If I had wanted a sermon, I would have kept the priest, but I asked for Monsieur de Chanlay."

"He is here, Monsieur; I refuse nothing to those who have nothing to hope."

"Ah, Chevalier, are you there?" said La Jonquière, turning round; "you are welcome."

"Captain," said Gaston; "I see with sorrow that you refuse the consolations of religion."

"You also! If you say another word like that, either of you, I declare I will turn Huguenot."

"Pardon, Captain, but I thought it my duty to advise you to do what I shall do myself."

"I bear you no ill-will, Chevalier; if I were a minister, I would proclaim religious liberty. Now, Monsieur de Launay," continued La Jonquière, rubbing his nose, "you can easily understand that as the chevalier and I are about to undertake a long journey together, we should be glad to converse a little in private."

"I understand you, Monsieur, and I will retire. Chevalier, you have an hour to remain here."

"Thank you, Monsieur," said Gaston.

As the governor went out, Gaston heard him giving orders, which were doubtless intended to incite the guards to vigilance. Gaston and La Jonquière were left alone.

"Well?" said the captain.

"Well," said Gaston, "you were right."

"Yes; but I am exactly like the man, who went round Jerusalem crying out 'Woe!' for seven days, and on the seventh day a stone thrown from the walls struck him and killed him."

"Yes; I know that you also are condemned, and that we are to die together."

"Which annoys you a little, does it not?"

"Very much, for I had many reasons for clinging to life."

"Every one has."

"But I above all."

"Then, my dear friend, there is only one thing to do."

"Make revelations? Never."

"No; but fly with me."

"What! fly with you?"

"Yes; I am about to decamp."

"But do you know that our execution is fixed for to-morrow?"

"Therefore I decamp to-night."

"Escape, do you say?"

"Certainly."

"How? Where?"

"Open the window."

"Well?"

"Shake the middle bar."

"Great God!"

"Does it resist?"

"No; it yields."

"Very good; it has given me trouble enough."

"Oh, it seems to me that I am in a dream!"

"Do you remember asking me if I did not make holes in something, like all the others?"

"Yes; but you replied —"

"That I would tell you another time; is the answer a good one?"

"Excellent; but how to descend?"

"Help me."

"In what?"

"To search my mattress."

"A ladder of cord?"

"Exactly."

"But how did you get it?"

"I received it with a file in a lark pie, on the day of my arrival."

"Certainly you are a great man."

"I know it; besides that, I am a good man, — for I might escape alone."

"And you have thought of me!"

"I asked for you, saying that I wished to say adieu to you. I knew I should entice them to do some act of stupidity."

"Let us make haste, Captain."

"On the contrary, let us act slowly and prudently; we have an hour before us."

"And the sentinels?"

"Bah, it is dark."

"But the moat, which is full of water?"

"It is frozen."

"But the wall?"

"When we are there, it will be soon enough to think about that."

"Must we fasten the ladder?"

"Wait a minute; I want to try it. I have an affection for my spine, such as it is, and don't want to break my neck in trying to prevent their cutting off my head."

"You are the first captain of the day, my dear La Jonquière."

"Bah, I have made plenty of others," said La Jonquière, tying the last knot in the ladder.

"Is it finished?" asked Gaston.

"Yes."

"Shall I go first?"

"As you like."

"I like it so."

"Go, then."

"Is it high?"

"Fifteen to eighteen feet."

"A trifle."

"Yes, for you who are young; but it is a different affair for me. Be prudent, I beg."

"Do not be afraid."

Gaston went first, slowly and prudently, followed by La Jonquière, who laughed in his sleeve, and grumbled every time he hurt his fingers, or when the wind shook the ladder. "A nice affair for the successor of Richelieu and Mazarin," muttered Dubois, between his teeth. "It is true I am not yet a cardinal; that saves me."

Gaston touched the water, or rather ice, of the moat; a moment after, La Jonquière was by his side. The sentinel, half-frozen, was in his box and had seen nothing.

"Now follow me," said La Jonquière.

On the other side of the moat a ladder awaited them.

"You have accomplices, then?"

"*Parbleu*, do you think the lark pie came by itself?"

"Who says one cannot escape from the Bastille?" said Gaston, joyously.

"My young friend," said Dubois, stopping on the third step, "take my advice; don't get in there again without me. You might not be so fortunate the second time as the first."

They continued to mount the wall, on the platform of

which a sentinel walked; but instead of opposing their ascent, he held his hand to La Jonquière to assist him to climb up to the platform. Then all of them, in silence and with the rapidity of those who know the value of minutes, drew up the ladder, and placed it on the other side of the wall. The descent was as safely managed, and La Jonquière and Gaston found themselves on another frozen moat.

"Now," said the captain, "we must take away the ladder, that we may not compromise the poor devil who helped us."

"We are then free?"

"Nearly so," said La Jonquière.

Gaston, strengthened by this news, took up the ladder on his shoulder.

"*Peste*, Chevalier! the late Hercules was nothing to you, I think."

"Bah," said Gaston; "at this moment I could carry the Bastille itself."

They went on in silence to a lane in the Faubourg St. Antoine; the streets were deserted.

"Now, my dear Chevalier," said La Jonquière, "do me the favor to follow me to the corner of the faubourg."

"I would follow you to hell."

"Not so far, if you please; for safety's sake we will each go our own way."

"What carriage is that?"

"Mine."

"What! yours?"

"Yes."

"*Peste*, my dear Captain, — four horses! You travel like a prince."

"Three horses; one is for you."

"What! you consent?"

"*Pardieu*, that is not all. You have no money?"

"It was taken away."

"Here are fifty louis."

"But, Captain —"

"Come, it is Spanish money; take it."

Gaston took the purse, while a postilion unharnessed a horse and led it to him.

"Now," said Dubois, "where are you going?"

"To Bretagne, to rejoin my companions."

"You are mad, my dear fellow; they are all condemned, and may be executed in two or three days."

"You are right," said Gaston.

"Go to Flanders," said La Jonquière; "it is a pleasant country. In fifteen or eighteen hours you can reach the frontier."

"Yes," said Gaston, gloomily; "thank you, I know where I shall go."

"Well, good luck to you," said Dubois, getting into his carriage.

"The same to you," said Gaston.

They grasped each other's hands, and then each went his own way.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

DUBOIS AT FAULT THROUGH JUDGING OTHERS BY HIMSELF.

THE regent, as usual, passed the evening with Hélène. He had not failed to make his daily visit for four or five days, and the hours he passed with her were his happy hours; but this time he found her very much shaken by her visit to her lover in the Bastille.

"Come," said the regent, "take courage, Hélène; to-morrow you shall be his wife."

"To-morrow is distant," replied the young girl.

"Hélène, believe in my word, which has never failed you. I tell you that to-morrow shall dawn happily for you and for him."

Hélène sighed deeply. At this moment a servant entered and spoke to the regent.

"What is it?" asked Hélène, who was alarmed at the slightest thing.

"Nothing, my child," said the duke; "it is only my secretary, who wishes to see me on some pressing business."

"Shall I leave you?"

"Yes; do me that favor for an instant."

Hélène withdrew into her room. At the same time the door opened and Dubois entered, out of breath.

"Where do you come from now?" said the regent,—"and in such a state?"

"*Parbleu!* from the Bastille."

"And our prisoner?"

"Well."

"Is everything arranged for the marriage?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, absolutely everything but the hour, which you did not name."

"Let us say eight in the morning."

"At eight in the morning —" said Dubois, calculating.

"Yes; what are you calculating?"

"I am thinking where he will be."

"Who?"

"The prisoner."

"What! the prisoner?"

"Yes; at eight o'clock he will be forty leagues from Paris!"

"Forty leagues from Paris?"

"Yes; if he continues to go at the pace at which I saw him set out."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Monseigneur, that there will be one thing only wanting at the marriage, and that is — the husband."

"Gaston?"

"Has escaped from the Bastille half an hour ago."

"You lie, Abbé; no one ever escapes from the Bastille."

"I beg your pardon, Monseigneur; when one is condemned to death he will escape from any place."

"He escaped, knowing that to-morrow he was to wed her whom he loved?"

"Listen, Monseigneur; life is a charming thing, and we all cling to it. Then your son-in-law has a charming head which he wishes to keep on his shoulders. What could be more natural?"

"And where is he?"

"Perhaps I shall be able to tell you to-morrow evening; at present all I know is that he is far away, and I will answer for it, he will not return."

The regent became deeply thoughtful.

"Really, Monseigneur, your naïveté causes me perpetual astonishment; you must be strangely ignorant of the human heart if you suppose that a man condemned to death would remain in prison when he had a chance of escape."

"Oh, Monsieur de Chanlay!" cried the regent.

"Eh, *mon Dieu!* this chevalier, this hero, has acted as the commonest workman would have done, — and quite right too."

"Dubois! And my daughter?"

"Well, your daughter, Monseigneur?"

"It will kill her," said the regent.

"Oh, no, Monseigneur, not at all; when she finds out what he is, she will be consoled, and you can marry her to some small German or Italian prince, — to the Duke of Modena, for instance, whom Mademoiselle de Valois will not have."

"Dubois! And I meant to pardon him."

"He has pardoned himself, Monseigneur, thinking it surer; and, faith, I should have done the same."

"Oh, you, — you are not noble; you had not taken an oath."

"You mistake, Monseigneur; I had taken an oath to prevent your Highness from committing a folly, and I have succeeded."

"Well, well, let us speak of it no more; not a word of this before Hélène, — I will undertake to tell her."

"And I, to get back your son-in-law."

"No, no; he has escaped. Let him profit by it."

As the regent spoke these words a noise was heard in the neighboring room, and a servant entering, hurriedly announced, —

"Monsieur le Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

That announcement produced very diverse effects upon

the two persons who heard it. Dubois turned pale as death, and his face assumed an expression of threatening anger. The regent rose in a transport of joy, which brought a bright color into his face. There was as much pleasure in this face, rendered sublime by confidence, as there was compressed fury in Dubois's shrewd and malignant countenance.

"Let him enter," said the regent.

"At least, give me time to go," said Dubois.

"Ah, yes; he would recognize you."

Dubois retired slowly, and with a growling noise, like a hyena disturbed in its feast, or in its lair; he went into the next room. There he sat down by a table lighted by two candles, and on which was every material for writing. The sight of writing materials seemed to suggest to him some new and terrible idea, for his face suddenly lighted up, and he smiled. He rang the bell and an usher entered. "Send for the portfolio which is in my carriage," said Dubois.

This order being executed at once, Dubois seized some papers, wrote on them a few words, with an expression of sinister joy, replaced everything in his portfolio, then, having ordered his carriage, drove to the Palais Royal.

Meanwhile the order given by the regent was obeyed, and the doors were opened to the chevalier. Gaston entered eagerly, and went straight to the duke, who offered him his hand.

"What! you here, Monsieur?" said the duke, trying to look surprised.

"Yes, Monseigneur; a miracle has been wrought in my favor by the brave Captain La Jonquière. He had prepared all for flight; he asked for me under pretence of consulting me as to confessions. Then, when we were

alone, he told me all, and we escaped together and in safety."

"And instead of flying, Monsieur, gaining the frontier, and placing yourself in safety, you are here at the peril of your life."

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, blushing, "I must confess that for a moment liberty seemed to me the most precious and the sweetest thing the world could afford. The first breath of air I drew seemed to intoxicate me; but almost immediately, Monseigneur, I reflected."

"On one thing, Monsieur, did you not?"

"On two, Monseigneur."

"You thought of Hélène, whom you were abandoning."

"And of my companions, whom I left under the axe."

"And then you decided?"

"That I was bound to their cause till our projects were accomplished."

"Our projects!"

"Yes; are they not yours as well as mine?"

"Listen, Monsieur," said the regent; "I believe that man must keep within the limits of his strength. There are things which God seems to forbid him to execute; there are warnings which tell him to renounce certain projects. I believe that it is sacrilege to despise these warnings, to remain deaf to this voice. Our projects have miscarried, Monsieur, let us think of them no longer."

"On the contrary, Monseigneur," said Gaston, sadly shaking his head, "let us think of them more than ever."

"But you are crazy, Monsieur," said the regent, "to persist in an undertaking which has now become so difficult that it is almost madness."

"I think, Mon[illegible]f our friends arrested, tried, condemned, — M[illegible]genso[illegible]o; of our

friends who are destined to the scaffold, and who can be saved only by the death of the regent; of our friends who would say, if I were to leave France, that I purchased my safety by their ruin, and that the gates of the Bastille were opened by my revelations."

"Then, Monsieur, to this point of honor you sacrifice everything, even Hélène?"

"Monseigneur, if they are still alive I must save them."

"But if they are dead?"

"Then it is another thing," replied Gaston; "then I must revenge them."

"Really, Monsieur," said the duke, "this seems to me a somewhat exaggerated idea of heroism. It seems to me that you have, in your own person, already paid your share. Believe me, take the word of a man who is a good judge in affairs of honor; you are absolved in the eyes of the whole world, my dear Brutus."

"I am not in my own, Monseigneur."

"Then you persist?"

"More than ever; the regent must die, and," he added in a hollow voice, "die he shall."

"But do you not first wish to see Mademoiselle de Chaverny?" asked the duke, in a voice slightly changed.

"Yes, Monseigneur; but first I must have your promise to aid me in my project. Remember, Monseigneur, there is not an instant to lose; my companions are condemned, as I was. Tell me at once, before I see Hélène, that you will not abandon me. Let me make a new engagement with you. I am a man; I love, and therefore I am weak; I shall have to struggle against her tears and against my own weakness. Monseigneur, I will see Hélène only on condition that you will enable me to see the regent."

"And if I refuse that condition?"

"Then, Monseigneur, I will not see Hélène; I am dead to her. It is useless to renew hope in her which she must lose again; it is enough that she must weep for me once."

"And you would still persist?"

"Yes, but with less chance."

"Then what would you do?"

"I would go and await the regent wherever he was likely to be, and I would strike him whenever I might find him."

"Once more, reflect," said the duke.

"By the honor of my name," replied Gaston, "I once more implore your aid; and if it is withheld, I declare to you that I will find means to dispense with it."

"Well, Monsieur, go and see Hélène, and you shall have my answer on your return."

"Where is she?"

"In that room."

"And the answer will be according to my desire?"

"Yes."

Gaston went into Hélène's room; she was kneeling before a crucifix, praying that her lover might be restored to her. At the noise which Gaston made in opening the door she turned round. She thought that God had wrought a miracle, and uttered a loud cry, holding out her arms toward the chevalier, but without strength to rise. "Oh, *mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed, "is it himself? Is it his shade?"

"It is myself, Hélène," said the young man, darting toward her, and grasping her hands.

"But how?—a prisoner this morning, free this evening?"

"I escaped, Hélène."

"And then you thought of me, you ran to me, you would not fly without me. Oh, I recognize my Gaston there! Well, I am ready, — take me where you will; I am yours, I follow you — "

"Hélène," said Gaston, "you are not the bride of an ordinary man; if I had been only like all other men, you would not have loved me."

"Oh, no!"

"Well, Hélène, to superior souls superior duties are allotted, and consequently greater trials. Before I can be yours I have to accomplish the mission on which I came to Paris; we have both a fatal destiny to fulfil. Our life or death hangs on a single event which must be accomplished to-night."

"What do you mean?" cried the young girl.

"Listen, Hélène," replied Gaston, "if in four hours, that is to say, by daybreak, you have no news of me, do not expect me; look upon all that has taken place between us as a dream; and if you can obtain permission to do so, come again and see me in the Bastille."

Hélène turned pale, and her arms fell lifeless by her sides. Gaston took her hand, and led her to her prie-dieu, where she knelt. Then kissing her on the forehead as a brother might have done, "Pray on, Hélène;" said he, "for in praying for me you pray also for Bretagne and for France." Then he rushed out of the room.

"Alas! alas!" murmured Hélène, "save him, my God! save him! What to me is all the world beside?"

On returning to the salon, Gaston was met by a servant who gave him a note, and informed him that the duke had gone. The note was as follows:—

"There is a *bal masque* to-night at Monceaux; the regent will be there. He generally retires toward one o'clock in the morning into a favorite conservatory, which is situated at the

end of the gilded gallery. No one enters there ordinarily but himself, because this habit of his is known and respected. The regent will be dressed in a black velvet domino, on the left arm of which is embroidered a golden bee. He hides this sign in a fold when he wishes to remain incognito. The card I enclose is an ambassador's ticket. With this you will be admitted, not only to the ball, but to this conservatory, where you will appear to be seeking a private interview. Use it for your encounter with the regent. My carriage is below, in which you will find my own domino. The coachman is at your orders."

On reading this note, which, as it were, brought him face to face with the man he meant to assassinate, a cold perspiration passed over Gaston's forehead, and he was obliged for a moment to lean against a chair for support; but suddenly, as if taking a violent resolution, he darted down the staircase, jumped into the carriage, and cried, "To Monceaux!"

But as soon as he had left the salon a secret door in the woodwork opened, and the duke entered. He went to Hélène's door, who uttered a cry of delight at seeing him.

"Well," said the regent, with a sad smile, "are you content, Hélène?"

"Oh, it is you, Monseigneur?"

"You see, my child, that my predictions are fulfilled. Believe me when I say, 'Hope!'"

"Ah, Monseigneur, are you then an angel come down to earth to stand to me in the place of the father whom I have lost?"

"Alas," said the regent, smiling. "I am not an angel, my dear Hélène; but such as I am, I will indeed be to you a father, and a tender one."

Saying this, the regent took Hélène's hand, and was about to kiss it respectfully, but she raised her head and presented her forehead to him.

"I see that you love him truly," said he.

"Monseigneur, I bless you."

"May your blessing bring me happiness," said the regent. Then, still smiling, he left her and went to his carriage. "To the Palais Royal, first," said he, "but remember you have only a quarter of an hour to drive to Monceaux." The horses flew along the road. As the carriage entered under the peristyle, a courier on horseback was setting out. Dubois, having seen him start, closed the window and went back to his apartments.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### MONCEAUX.

MEANWHILE Gaston was on his way toward Monceaux. He had found the duke's domino and mask in the carriage. The mask was of black velvet; the domino of violet satin. He put them both on; then suddenly he remembered that he was unarmed. In fact, when he left the Bastille he had hastened directly to the Rue du Bac; and now he dare not return to his lodgings in the Muid d'Amour, for fear he might be recognized and arrested; nor did he dare apply at a cutler's shop, for fear his purchase might arouse suspicions. He thought, however, that on his arrival at Monceaux he could easily procure a weapon of some kind.

But as Gaston approached nearer to the scene of action, he found it was not a weapon that he needed, but courage. A terrible contest took place within him. Pride and humanity struggled against each other; and, from time to time, he was obliged to picture to himself his friends in prison, condemned, and threatened with a cruel and infamous death, in order to strengthen himself in his original purpose. And when the carriage entered the courtyard of Monceaux, and stopped before the brilliantly illuminated pavilion, in spite of the freezing temperature, Gaston felt the perspiration under his mask, and murmured the single word, "Already!"

However, the carriage had stopped, the door was opened, he must alight. The prince's private carriage and coach-

man had been recognized, and all the servants overwhelmed him with attentions.

Gaston did not observe this eagerness. He alighted with a firm step, although a kind of mist passed before his eyes, and presented his card. But the lackeys respectfully opened their ranks before him, as if to say that the formality of a card of admission was altogether superfluous.

It was the custom then for both men and women to be masked; but women more frequently than men went to these reunions unmasked. At this period women spoke not only fluently, but intelligently; and the mask hid neither folly nor inferiority of rank, for the women of that day were all witty, and if they were handsome, they were soon titled, — as, for example, the Duchesse de Châteauroux and the Comtesse Dubarry.

Gaston knew no one, but he felt instinctively that he was among the most select society of the day. Among the men were Noailles, Brancas, Broglie, Saint-Simon, and Biron. As to the women, there was perhaps a greater mingling of ranks among them, but not less wit, nor less elegance. All the aristocracy rallied around the bravest and most popular prince in the royal family.

No one else knew so well as the regent how to organize a fête. That luxury in good taste, that profusion of flowers, those lights, those princes and ambassadors, those charming and beautiful women who surrounded him, — all had their effect on the young provincial, who, while still remote from him, had thought of the regent only as a man, but now recognized him as a king, and a king powerful, gay, amiable, beloved, and above all, popular and national.

Gaston felt that in that atmosphere of luxury he was becoming intoxicated. Many were the bright eyes that

shone upon him, penetrating his soul with their flaming rays. His heart bounded when, in seeking among those masked faces him for whom his blows were destined, he saw a black domino. He staggered and lost at once his self-control; he became like a boat without oars or sail, which rises and falls as it is moved by the waves; in one moment he passed from paradise to the infernal regions. But for the mask which hid his face and concealed from all eyes its changing expression, he would not have taken four steps in those halls before some one would have pointed him out and said, "There is an assassin!"

Gaston could not conceal from himself that there was something cowardly in coming to a prince, his host, to change those brilliant lights into funeral torches, to stain those dazzling tapestries with blood, to arouse the cry of terror amid the joyous tumlt of a fête. As he thought of this his courage failed him, and he stepped toward the door. "I will kill him outside," said he, "but not here."

Then he remembered the duke's directions, his card which would open to him the isolated conservatory, and he murmured, "He foresaw that I should be afraid of the crowd; he divined, then, that I was a coward!"

He approached a sort of gallery containing buffets, where the guests came for refreshment. He went with the others; not because he was hungry or thirsty, but because he was unarmed. He chose a long, sharp, and pointed knife, and after a quick glance around to make sure that he was not observed, he slipped it under his domino. "A knife!" he murmured, with a funereal smile, — "a knife! The likeness to Ravaillac will be complete."

As this thought took shape in his mind, Gaston turned and saw approaching him a man who wore a domino of blue velvet. A few steps behind him walked another

man and a woman, both masked. The blue domino noticed that they were following him, and turning toward them with an air of authority he said a few words to the man, who bowed to him respectfully, and then he accosted Gaston. "You hesitate!" he said in a voice which Gaston immediately recognized.

Gaston opened his domino and showed the duke the knife which it concealed.

"I see the knife glisten, but I see also the hand tremble."

"Yes, Monseigneur, it is true," said Gaston; "I hesitated, I trembled, I felt inclined to fly, but thank God, you are here."

"And your ferocious courage?" said the duke, in a mocking voice.

"It is not that I have lost it, Monseigneur."

"What has become of it, then?"

"Monseigneur, I am under his roof."

"Yes; but you are not in the conservatory."

"Can you not show him to me first, that I may accustom myself to his presence, that I may be inspired by the hatred I bear him?—for I do not know him to find him in this crowd."

"Just now he was near you."

Gaston shuddered. "Near me," said he.

"As near as I am," replied the duke, gravely.

"I will go to the conservatory, Monseigneur."

"Go, then."

"Yet a moment, Monseigneur, that I may recover myself."

"Very well; you know the conservatory is beyond that gallery. Stay, the doors are closed."

"Did you not say that upon my showing this card the servants would open them to me?"

"Yes; but it will be better to open them yourself; the servants who admit you may wait for your departure. If you are thus agitated before you strike the blow, that will give the affair quite a different result from what you desire. Then the regent probably will not fall without defending himself, without crying out; they will run to him, you will be arrested, and adieu to your hope of the future. Think of Hélène, who waits for you."

It is impossible to describe what was passing in Gaston's heart during this speech. The duke, however, watched its effect upon his countenance.

"Well," said Gaston, "what shall I do? Advise me."

"When you are at the door of the conservatory, the one which opens into the gallery on the left, — do you know?"

"Yes."

"Under the lock you will find a carved button; push it, and the door will open, unless it be fastened within. But the regent, who has no suspicion, will not have taken this precaution. I have been there twenty times for a private audience. If he is not there, wait for him. You will recognize him, if he is there, by the black domino and the golden bee."

"Yes, yes; I know," said Gaston, not knowing, however, what he said.

"I do not reckon much on you this evening," replied the duke.

"Ah, Monseigneur, it is because the moment approaches which will change my past life into a doubtful future, — a future of shame, perhaps, at least of remorse."

"Remorse!" replied the duke. "When one performs an action which he believes to be just and commanded by conscience, he does not feel remorse. Do you doubt, then, the sanctity of your cause?"

"No, Monseigneur. But it is easy for you to speak in this way. You are only the idea; I am the execution. You are the head, but I am the arm. Believe me, Monseigneur," he continued, in a hollow voice, and choking with emotion, "it is a terrible thing to kill a man who is defenceless before you, — smiling on his murderer. I thought myself courageous and strong; but it must be thus with every conspirator who undertakes what I have done. In a moment of excitement, of pride, of enthusiasm, or of hatred, he takes a fatal vow; then a certain period of time intervenes to separate him from his victim. The oath has been taken, but the fever is calmed, the enthusiasm cools, the hatred diminishes. As the day draws near he shudders with dread, for then he understands to what a crime he is pledged. And yet inexorable time flows on; and at every hour which strikes he sees the victim coming ever nearer, until at last he is within reach. Then, then, Monseigneur, believe me, the bravest tremble; for an assassination is always an assassination. Then one perceives that he is not the servant of his conscience, but the slave of his oath. He started out with head erect, saying 'I am the chosen one!' he arrives with head bowed down, saying 'I am accursed!'"

"There is yet time, Monsieur," said the duke, with eagerness.

"No, no; you well know, Monseigneur, that there is a fatality which urges me onward. I will accomplish my task, terrible though it be. My heart will shudder, but my hand will still be firm. Yes, I tell you, were it not for my friends yonder, whose lives hang on the blow I am about to strike, were there no Hélène, whom I cover with mourning if I do not cover her with blood, — oh, I would prefer the scaffold, even the scaffold with all its shame; for the scaffold does not punish, it absolves."

"Come," said the duke, "I see that though you tremble, you will act."

"Do not doubt it, Monseigneur; pray for me, for in half an hour all will be over."

The duke gave an involuntary start; however, with a gesture of assent and approbation, he turned away and mingled with the crowd.

Gaston found a window open over a balcony. He went out to quench in the coldness of the atmosphere the fever beating in his arteries. But the inward flame was too strong, and it continued to consume him. He then went back, and proceeding a few steps along the gallery, he approached the door of the conservatory and put his hand on the carved button; but he thought he was observed by a group of persons standing near, and retracing his steps, he returned to the balcony. At that moment the clock of the neighboring church struck one. "Now," he murmured, "the time is come, and I cannot draw back. My God, to thee I commit my soul! Adieu, Hélène, adieu!"

Then, with a slow but firm step, he pressed through the crowd, went straight to the door, pressed the button, and the door opened noiselessly before him.

A mist came before his eyes. He thought himself in a new world. The music sounded like a distant and charming melody. Around him breathed the sweetly perfumed flowers, and alabaster lamps, half-hidden in luxuriant foliage, shed a delicious twilight over the scene, while through the interlacing leaves of tropical plants could just be seen, beyond the windows of the conservatory, the leafless gloomy trees, and the snow covering the earth as with a winding sheet. Even the temperature was changed, and a sudden shiver passed through his veins. The contrast of all this verdure with the gilded salons he

had left bewildered him. It seemed difficult to connect the thought of murder with this fair-smiling and enchanted scene. The soft gravel yielded to his tread, and plashing fountains murmured forth a plaintive and monotonous harmony.

Nevertheless, he continued to advance, following the course of a winding path. He saw only confusedly, for he was afraid to see; he dreaded lest among the plants and trees he should distinguish a human form. He thought he heard a noise behind him, and seized with a vague terror, he turned suddenly to look. There was nothing; he went on.

At length, beneath a broad-leaved catalpa which was surrounded by blooming rhododendrons, he saw the black phantom seated on a bank of moss, his back turned toward him. The blood rushed to his cheeks, his hand trembled, and he vainly sought for some support. The domino did not move.

Gaston recoiled in spite of himself. Then, suddenly, he made a desperate effort, forced his rebellious limbs to move on, and his trembling fingers to grasp the knife they had almost abandoned, and stepped toward the regent, suppressing a groan which almost broke from him. At this moment the figure moved, and Gaston saw upon his arm the golden bee, which seemed not to shine, but to blaze with a brilliant flame.

The domino turned slowly toward Gaston, and as he did so, the young man's arm grew rigid, the foam rose to his lips, and his teeth chattered; a bewildering suspicion oppressed his senses. Suddenly he uttered a piercing cry. The domino had risen. He wore no mask, and his face was that of the Duc d'Olivarès.

Gaston, thunderstruck, remained livid and silent. The regent and the duke were one and the same. The regent

retained his calm, majestic attitude. He looked steadily at the hand which held the knife, and the knife fell. Then he looked at Gaston with a smile at once sweet and sad, and Gaston went down on his knees before him like a tree cut by the axe. Not a word had been spoken; nothing was heard but Gaston's broken sobs, and the water of the fountains plashing monotonously as it fell.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE PARDON.

"Rise, Monsieur," said the regent.

"No, Monseigneur," cried Gaston, bowing his forehead to the ground, "oh, no; I ought rather to die at your feet."

"Die, Gaston? You see that you are pardoned."

"Oh, Monseigneur, punish me, in Heaven's name! For you must indeed despise me if you pardon me."

"But have you not understood?" asked the regent.

"What?"

"The reason why I pardon you."

Gaston cast a glance over the past, — his sad and solitary youth, his brother's despairing death, his love for Hélène, those days that seemed so long away from her, those hours of night that passed so quickly beneath the convent window, his journey to Paris, the duke's kindness to the young girl, and finally, this unexpected clemency; but in all this he beheld nothing, he divined nothing.

"Thank Hélène," said the duke, who saw that Gaston was searching in vain for the explanation of what had happened, — "thank Hélène, for it is she who saves your life."

"Hélène! Monseigneur — " murmured Gaston.

"I cannot punish my daughter's affianced husband."

"Hélène, your daughter! Oh, Monseigneur, and I would have killed you!"

"Yes; remember what you said just now. One starts forth the chosen one, he returns an assassin; and some-

times you see more than an assassin, — a parricide, — for I am almost your father," said the duke, holding out his hand to Gaston.

"Monseigneur, have pity on me!"

"You have a noble heart, Gaston."

"And you, Monseigneur, are a noble prince. Henceforth I am yours body and soul; every drop of my blood for one of Hélène's tears, for one of your Highness's wishes."

"Thanks, Gaston," said the duke, smiling, "I will repay your devotion by your happiness."

"I, happy, through your Highness? Ah, Monseigneur, God revenges himself in permitting you to return me so much good for the evil I intended you."

The regent smiled at this effusion of simple joy, when the door opened and gave entrance to a green domino. Gaston started back on seeing him, as if with a presentiment that the end of his happiness was approaching. The duke, noticing the change in Gaston's face, turned round to see what had happened.

"Captain la Jonquière," cried Gaston.

"Dubois!" murmured the duke, frowning.

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, turning pale with a new horror, — "Monseigneur, I am lost! It is no longer I who must be saved. I forgot my honor; I forgot my friends."

"Your friends, Monsieur?" said the duke, coldly. "I thought you no longer made common cause with such men."

"Monseigneur, you said I had a noble heart; believe me when I say that Pontcalec, Montlouis, Du Couëdic, and Talhouet have hearts as noble as my own."

"Noble!" repeated the duke, contemptuously.

"Yes, Monseigneur, I repeat what I said."

"And do you know what they would have done, poor child, — who were their blind tool, the arm that they applied to the execution of their purposes? These noble hearts would have delivered their country to the stranger; they would have erased the name of France from the list of sovereign nations. Nobles, they were bound to set an example of courage and loyalty; they have given that of perfidy and cowardice. Well, you do not reply, — you lower your eyes. If you are looking for your knife, it lies at your feet; take it up, there is yet time."

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, clasping his hands, "I renounce my ideas of assassination, I detest them, and I ask your pardon on my knees for having entertained them; but if you will not save my friends, I beg of you at least to let me perish with them. If I live when they die, my honor dies with them; think of it, Monseigneur, the honor of the name your daughter is to bear."

The regent bent his head as he replied, "It is impossible, Monsieur. They have betrayed France; and they must die."

"Then I die with them," said Gaston; "for I also have betrayed France, and, moreover, would have murdered your Highness."

The regent looked at Dubois; the glance they exchanged did not escape Gaston. Dubois smiled. The young man then understood that he had been dealing with a pretended La Jonquière as well as with a pretended Duc d'Olivarès.

"No," said Dubois, addressing Gaston, "you shall not die for that, Monsieur; but you must understand that there are crimes which the regent has neither the power nor the right to pardon."

"But he pardoned me!" exclaimed Gaston.

"You are Hélène's husband," said the duke.

"You mistake, Monseigneur; I am not, and I never shall be. And as such a sacrifice involves the death of him who makes it, I shall die, Monseigneur."

"Bah," said Dubois, "no one dies of love nowadays; that took place in the time of Monsieur d'Urfé and Mademoiselle de Scudéri."

"Perhaps you are right, Monsieur; but in all times men die of a dagger-stroke." And Gaston stooped and picked up the knife with an expression which was not to be mistaken. Dubois did not move.

The regent made a step forward. "Throw down that weapon, Monsieur," said he, with hauteur.

Gaston placed the point against his breast.

"Throw it down, I say," repeated the regent.

"The life of my friends, Monseigneur," said Gaston.

The regent turned again to Dubois, who smiled, — still with the same sardonic expression.

"'T is well," said the regent; "they shall live."

"Ah, Monseigneur," said Gaston, seizing the duke's hand, and trying to raise it to his lips, "you are the image of God on earth."

"Monseigneur, you commit an irreparable fault," said Dubois.

"What!" cried Gaston, astonished; "you are then —"

"The Abbé Dubois, at your service," said the pretended La Jonquière, bowing.

"Oh, Monseigneur, listen only to your own heart, I beseech you."

"Monseigneur, sign nothing," said Dubois.

"Sign! Monseigneur, sign!" repeated Gaston. "You promised they should live, and I know your promise is sacred."

"Dubois, I shall sign," said the duke.

"Has your Highness decided?"

"I have given my word."

"Very well; as you please."

"At once, Monseigneur, at once! I know not why, but I am alarmed in spite of myself. Monseigneur, their pardon, I implore you!"

"Eh, Monsieur," said Dubois, "since his Highness has promised, what signify five minutes more or less?"

The regent looked uneasily at Dubois. "Yes, you are right," said he, "this very moment. Your portfolio, Abbé, and let us hasten; the young man is impatient."

Dubois bowed assent, called a servant, got his portfolio, and presented to the regent a sheet of paper, who wrote an order on it and signed it.

"Now a courier," said the duke.

"Oh, no, Monseigneur, it is useless."

"Why so?"

"A courier would never go quickly enough. I will go myself, if your Highness will permit me; every moment I gain will save those unhappy men an age of torture."

Dubois frowned.

"Yes, yes, you are right," said the regent, "go yourself, and," he added in a low voice, "do not let the order leave your hands."

"But, Monseigneur," said Dubois, "you are more impatient than Monsieur de Chanlay himself. You forgot that if he goes thus there is some one in Paris who will think he is dead."

These words impressed Gaston, and recalled to him Hélène, whom he had left agitated by the dread of some fearful event, who was expecting his return from moment to moment, and who would never forgive him should he leave Paris without seeing her. In an instant his resolution was taken; he kissed the duke's hand, took the order, and was going, when the regent said, —

"Not a word to Hélène of the secret I have disclosed to you; the only recompense I ask of you is to leave me the pleasure of telling her she is my child."

"Your Highness shall be obeyed," said Gaston, moved to tears; and again bowing, he hastily went out.

"This way," said Dubois. "Really, you look as if you had assassinated some one, and you will be arrested. Cross this grove, at the end is a path which will lead you to the street."

"Oh, thank you; you understand that delay —"

"Might be fatal. That is why," added he to himself, "I have shown you the longest way. Go."

When Gaston had disappeared Dubois returned to the regent. "What is the matter, Monseigneur?" he asked; "you seem uneasy."

"I am."

"And why?"

"You made so slight resistance to my performing a good action. That troubles me."

Dubois smiled.

"Dubois," said the duke, "you are planning something."

"No, Monseigneur, it is all planned."

"What have you done?"

"Monseigneur, I know you."

"Well?"

"I knew what would happen, — that you would never be satisfied till you had signed the pardon of all these fellows."

"Go on."

"Well, I also have sent a courier."

"You?"

"Yes, I; have I not the right to send couriers?"

"Yes; but, in Heaven's name! tell me what order your courier carried."

"An order for their execution."

"And he has gone?"

Dubois took out his watch. "Two hours ago," said he.

"Scoundrel!"

"Ah, Monseigneur, always big words. Every man to his trade. Save Monsieur de Chanlay, if you like, —he is your son-in-law; as for me, I save you."

"Yes; but I know De Chanlay. He will arrive before the courier."

"No, Monseigneur."

"Two hours are nothing to a man like him; he will soon have gained them."

"Were my courier only two hours in advance," said Dubois, "De Chanlay might overtake him, but he will be three."

"How so?"

"Because the worthy young man is in love; and if I give him an hour for taking leave of your daughter, I am sure it is not too much."

"Serpent! I understand now the purpose of what you said."

"He was in an excess of enthusiasm; he might have forgotten his love. You know my principle, Monseigneur; distrust first impulses, they are always good."

"It is an infamous principle."

"Monseigneur, either one is a diplomatist or one is not."

"Well," said the regent, stepping toward the door, "I will go and warn him."

"Monseigneur," said Dubois, stopping the duke with an accent of extreme resolution, and taking a paper already prepared out of his portfolio, "have the kindness in that case to accept my resignation at once. Joke, if you will,

but, as Horace said, 'Est modus in rebus.' He was a great as well as a courteous man. Come, come, Monseigneur, a truce to politics for this evening. Go back to the ball, and to-morrow evening all will be settled; France will be rid of four of her worst enemies, and you will have a very promising son-in-law, whom I greatly prefer to Monsieur de Riom, I assure you."

They returned to the ball-room, Dubois joyous and triumphant, the duke sad and thoughtful, but convinced that his minister was right.

# CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE LAST INTERVIEW.

Gaston left the conservatory, his heart bounding with joy. The enormous weight which had oppressed him since the beginning of the conspiracy, and which Hélène's love had scarcely been able to alleviate, now seemed to disappear as at the touch of an angel. To dreams of vengeance — dreams terrible and bloody — succeeded visions of love and glory. Hélène was not only a charming and a loving woman, she was also a princess of the blood royal, — one of those divinities whose love would be gladly purchased at the cost of life itself, did they not, being weak like other mortals, give their love for nothing.

And Gaston felt revive within his breast the slumbering instinct of ambition. What a brilliant fortune was his, — a fortune to be envied by such men as Richelieu and Lauzun. He had to deal, not with a Louis XIV., imposing, as on Lauzun, exile or the abandonment of his mistress; not with an irritated father combating the pretensions of a simple gentleman, — but with a powerful friend, greedy of love, longing to prove his affection for his pure and noble daughter. And there would be a sacred emulation between the daughter and the son-in-law to make themselves more worthy of so just a prince, so mild a conqueror. It seemed to Gaston that his heart could not contain so much joy, — his friends saved, his future assured, Hélène the daughter of the regent! He so urged the horses and the coachman that in less than

a quarter of an hour he was at the house in the Rue du Bac.

The door opened before him, and a cry was heard. Hélène, at the window watching for his return, had recognized the carriage, and ran joyously to meet him.

"Saved!" cried Gaston, on seeing her; "saved! — my friends, I, you, — all saved!"

"O God!" cried Hélène, turning pale, "you have killed him, then?"

"No, no; thank God! Oh, Hélène, what a heart, what a man is this regent! Oh, love him well, Hélène; you will love him, will you not?"

"Explain yourself, Gaston."

"Come, and let us speak of ourselves; I have but a few moments to give you, Hélène, but the duke will tell you all."

"One thing before all," said Hélène, "what is your fate?"

"The brightest in the world, Hélène, — your husband, rich and honored. Hélène, I am wild with joy."

"And you remain with me at last?"

"No; I leave you, Hélène."

"Oh, Heavens!"

"But to return."

"Another separation!"

"Three days at the most, — three days only. I go to bring blessings on your name, on mine, on that of our protector, our friend."

"Where are you going?"

"To Nantes."

"To Nantes?"

"Yes. This order is the pardon of Pontcalec, Montlouis, Talhouet, and Du Couëdic. They are condemned to death, and they will owe me their lives. Oh, do not

keep me here, Hélène; think of what you suffered just now, when you were watching for me."

"And consequently of what I am to suffer still."

"No, my Hélène; for this time there is no fear, no obstacle, — this time you are sure of my return."

"Gaston, shall I never see you, but at rare intervals and for a few minutes? Ah, Gaston, I have so much need of happiness!"

"You will be happy, Hélène, be assured."

"My heart sinks."

"Ah, when you know all!"

"But tell me at once."

"Hélène, the only thing wanting to my happiness is the permission to fall at your feet and tell you all; but I have promised, — nay more, I have sworn."

"Always some secret!"

"This, at least, is a joyful one."

"Oh, Gaston, Gaston, I tremble!"

"Look at me, Hélène; can you fear when you see the joy that sparkles in my eyes?"

"Why do you not take me with you, Gaston?"

"Hélène!"

"I beg of you, let us go together."

"Impossible."

"Why?"

"Because, firstly, I must be at Nantes in twenty hours."

"I will follow you, even though it be to die with fatigue."

"Then, because you are no longer your own mistress; you have here a protector, to whom you owe respect and obedience."

"The duke?"

"Yes; the duke. Oh, when you know what he has done for me — for us!"

"Let us leave a letter for him, and he will forgive us."

"No, no; he will say we are ungrateful,—and he would be right. No, Hélène; while I go to Bretagne, swift as a saving angel, you will remain here and hasten the preparations for our marriage. And when I return, I will at once demand my wife; at your feet I will bless you for the happiness and the honor you bestow on me."

"You leave me, Gaston!" cried Hélène, in a voice of distress.

"Oh, not thus, Hélène, not thus; I cannot leave you so. Oh, no,—be joyous, Hélène. Smile on me; say to me, in giving me your hand,—that hand so pure and faithful,—'Go, Gaston, go, for it is your duty.'"

"Yes, my friend," said Hélène; "perhaps I ought to speak thus, but I have not the strength. Gaston, forgive me."

"Oh, Hélène, when I am so joyful!"

"Gaston, it is beyond my power; remember that you take with you the half of my life."

Gaston heard the clock strike three and started.

"Adieu, Hélène!" said he, "adieu!"

"Adieu!" she murmured.

Once more he pressed her hand and raised it to his lips, then dashed down the staircase toward the door. But he heard Hélène's sobs. Rapidly he remounted the staircase and ran to her. She was standing at the door of the room he had just left. Gaston clasped her in his arms, and she hung weeping upon his neck.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" she cried, "you leave me, Gaston, you leave me! Listen to what I say; we shall never meet again."

"My poor Hélène," cried the young man, "you are mad!"

"Yes, mad,—but with despair," she replied; and tears

ran down her cheeks. Then, suddenly, and as if putting an end to hesitation, she pressed her lips on those of her lover, and clasped him tightly to her breast. Then, gently pushing him away, "Now go, Gaston," said she; "now I can die."

Gaston replied to that kiss with passionate caresses. The clock struck the half-hour.

"Another half-hour to make up," said he.

"Adieu, adieu, Gaston; you are right, you should already be away."

"Adieu, till our meeting soon."

"Adieu, Gaston."

And Hélène returned in silence to the pavilion, like a ghost returning to its tomb. Gaston hastened to the post, demanded that the best horse should be saddled for him, threw himself on its back, and left Paris by the same gate by which he had entered some days previously.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### NANTES.

THE commission named by Dubois was to be permanent. Invested with unlimited powers, which in certain cases means that the decision is settled beforehand, they established themselves in the château, supported by strong detachments of troops who expected every moment an attack by the malecontents. After the arrest of the four gentlemen, Nantes, terrified at first, began to be stirred in their favor. The whole of Bretagne expected a rising; but while it expected, it did not rise.

Meanwhile the trial was approaching. On the eve of the public audience, Pontcalec held a serious conversation with his friends.

"Let us consider," said he, "whether in word or deed we have committed any imprudence."

"No," said the other three.

"Has any one of you imparted our projects to his wife, his brother, a friend? Have you, Montlouis?"

"No, on my honor?"

"You, Talhouet?"

"No."

"You, Couëdic?"

"No."

"Then they have neither proof nor accusation against us. No one has surprised us, no one wishes us harm."

"But," said Montlouis, "meanwhile we shall be condemned."

"On what grounds?"

"On secret information," said Talhouet, smiling.

"Very secret," said Du Couëdic, "since they do not breathe a word of it."

"It is because they are ashamed," said Pontcalec; "and some fine night they will force us to escape, that they may not be obliged to liberate us some fine day."

"I do not believe it," said Montlouis, who had always been the most desponding, perhaps because he had the most at stake, having a young wife and two children who adored him. "I do not believe it. I have seen Dubois in England. I have talked with him. His face is like a ferret's who licks his lips when thirsty. Dubois is thirsty, and we are taken. Dubois' thirst will be slaked by our blood."

"But," said Du Couëdic, "there is the parliament of Bretagne."

"Yes; to look on while we lose our heads," replied Montlouis.

There was only one of the four who smiled; that was Pontcalec. "My friends," said he, "take courage. If Dubois be thirsty, so much the worse for Dubois. He will go mad, that is all; but this time, I answer for it, he will not taste our blood."

And, indeed, from the beginning the task of the commission seemed difficult. There were no confessions, no proofs, no witnesses. Bretagne laughed in the commissioners' faces, and when she did not laugh, she threatened. The president despatched a courier to Paris to explain the state of things, and get further instructions.

"Judge by their projects," said Dubois; "they may have done little, because they were prevented; but they intended much, and the intention in matters of rebellion is equivalent to the act."

Armed with this terrible weapon, the commission soon overthrew the hopes of the province. There was an exciting session of the court, in which the accused began with raillery and ended with accusation. But a commission well constituted — as Dubois knew how to constitute it when he wished — was proof against both ridicule and accusation.

On re-entering the prison, Pontcalec congratulated his companions on the truths they had told the judges.

"Nevertheless," said Montlouis, "our affair has a bad look. Bretagne does not revolt."

"She waits our condemnation," said Talhouet.

"Then she will revolt too late," said Montlouis.

"But our condemnation may not take place," said Pontcalec. "Let us admit frankly, among ourselves, that we are guilty; yes, but there are no proofs, and without proofs who will dare to sentence us? The commission?"

"No, not the commission, but Dubois."

"I have a great mind to do one thing," said Du Couëdic.

"What?"

"At the next session to cry out, 'Bretagne to the rescue!' At every session I have seen a good number of friendly faces. We should be delivered or killed; but at least the matter would be decided. I should prefer death to this suspense."

"But why run the risk of being wounded by some satellite of justice?" asked Pontcalec.

"Because such a wound might be healed," replied Du Couëdic; "not so the wound the executioner would make."

"Well said, Du Couëdic," cried Montlouis; "and I will join you."

"Have no concern, Montlouis," said Pontcalec; "you will have no more to do with the executioner than I shall."

"Oh, yes; always the prediction," said Montlouis. "You know that I have no faith in it, Pontcalec."

"You are wrong."

Montlouis and Du Couëdic shook their heads, but Talhouet nodded assent.

"This is sure, my friends," said Pontcalec. "We shall be exiled; we shall be compelled to go by water, and I shall be lost on the way. This is my destiny. But yours may be different. Ask to go by a different vessel from mine. Or there is another chance, I may fall from the deck, or my foot may slip as I climb a ladder. In short, I am to be destroyed by the sea; you know that is certain. I might be condemned to death, taken to the very scaffold, but if the scaffold were on dry ground I should be as unconcerned as I am now."

That tone of confidence gave courage to the three friends. It is easy to be superstitious in hope; hope is itself a superstition. The prisoners even laughed at the rapidity with which the deliberations were carried on. They did not know that Dubois sent courier after courier from Paris to hasten them.

At length the commission declared themselves sufficiently enlightened, and retired to deliberate in secret session. Never was there a more stormy discussion. History has penetrated the secrets of these deliberations. Some of the least bold or least ambitious counsellors revolted against the idea of condemning these gentlemen on presumptions which were supported solely by the intelligence transmitted to them by Dubois. But the majority were devoted to Dubois. Abusive words were spoken, quarrels sprang up, and some of the members were near resorting to blows. At the close of a session lasting eleven hours, the majority formulated their decision, based, not on information gleaned at Nantes, but on instructions sent from Paris.

They associated with the four imprisoned chiefs sixteen other contumacious noblemen, and ordered that the accused, found guilty of criminal projects, of treason, and of felonious intentions, should be beheaded; those present, in person, those absent, in effigy. That the walls and fortifications of their castles should be demolished, their patents of nobility annulled, and their forests cut down to the height of nine feet.

An hour after the delivery of this sentence, an order was given to the clerk to announce it to the prisoners.

The sentence had been given at the close of the stormy session of which we have spoken, and in which the accused had observed manifest signs of sympathy on the part of the public. And so, having beaten the judges on all the counts of the indictment, never had they been so full of hope. They were seated at supper in their common room, calling to mind all the details of the session, when suddenly the door opened, and in the shade appeared the pale and stern form of the clerk. Immediately their pleasant conversation ceased, and with anxious beatings of the heart they awaited what was to come.

The usher advanced slowly, while the jailer remained at the door; the barrels of muskets were seen shining in the gloom of the corridor.

"What is your will, Monsieur?" asked Pontcalec; "and what signifies this sinister preparation?"

"Gentlemen," said the usher, "I bear the sentence of the tribunal. On your knees and listen."

"But," said Montlouis, "it is only sentences of death that must be heard kneeling."

"On your knees, gentlemen," replied the usher.

"Let the guilty and the base kneel," said Du Couëdic; "we are gentlemen, and innocent. We will hear our sentence standing."

"As you will, gentlemen; but uncover yourselves, for I speak in the king's name."

Talhouet, who alone had his hat on, removed it. The four gentlemen stood erect and bare-headed, leaning on each other, with pale faces and smiles on their lips. The clerk read the sentence through, uninterrupted by a murmur, or by a single gesture of surprise. When he had finished, Pontcalec exclaimed, —

"Why was I told that if I would declare the designs of Spain against France I should be liberated? Spain was an enemy's country. I declared what I believed I knew of her projects; and, lo! I am condemned. Why is this? Is the commission, then, composed of cowards who spread snares for the accused?"

The clerk made no answer.

"But," added Montlouis, "the regent spared all Paris, implicated in the conspiracy of Cellamare; not a drop of blood was shed. Yet those who wished to carry off the regent, perhaps to kill him, were at least as guilty as men against whom no serious accusations even could be made. Are we then chosen to pay for the indulgence shown to the capital?"

The clerk made no reply.

"You forgot one thing, Montlouis," said Du Couëdic, — "the old family hatred against Bretagne; and the regent, to make people believe that he belongs to the family, wishes to prove that he hates us. It is not we, personally, who are struck at; it is a province which for three hundred years has claimed in vain its privileges and its rights, and which they wish to find guilty in order to have done with it forever."

The clerk continued silent.

"Enough," said Talhouet; "we are condemned. 'T is well. Now, have we, or have we not, the right of appeal?"

"No, gentlemen," said the clerk.

"Then you can retire," said Du Couëdic.

The clerk bowed and withdrew, followed by his escort, and the prison door, heavy and clanging, closed once more upon the four gentlemen.

"Well," said Montlouis, when they were again alone.

"Well, we are condemned," said Pontcalec. "I never said there would be no sentence; I only said it would not be carried into execution."

"I am of Pontcalec's opinion," said Talhouet. "What they have done is but to terrify the province and test its patience."

"Besides," said Du Couëdic, "they will not execute us without the regent's ratification of the sentence. Now, without an extraordinary courier, it will take two days to reach Paris, one to examine into the affair, and two to return, — five days in all. We have, then, five days before us; and what may not happen in five days? The province will rise on hearing of our doom — "

Montlouis shook his head.

"Besides, there is Gaston," said Pontcalec, "whom you always forget."

"I am much afraid that Gaston has been arrested," said Montlouis. "I know Gaston, and were he at liberty, we should have heard of him ere now."

"Prophet of evil," said Talhouet, "at least you will not deny that we have some days before us."

"Who knows?" said Montlouis.

"And then the sea," said Pontcalec, — "the sea. What the devil, gentlemen, you are always forgetting that I can be done to death only by the sea."

"Well, then, let us be seated again," said Du Couëdic, "and a last glass to our health."

"There is no more wine," said Montlouis; "'t is an evil omen."

"Bah, there is more in the cellar," said Pontcalec. And he called the jailer.

The man, on entering, found the four friends at table; he looked at them in astonishment.

"Well, what is there new, Master Christopher?" said Pontcalec.

Christopher came from Guer, and had a particular respect for Pontcalec, whose uncle Crysogon had been his seigneur.

"Nothing but what you know," he replied.

"Then go and get some wine for us."

"They wish to deaden their feelings," said the jailer to himself; "poor gentlemen!"

Montlouis alone heard Christopher's remark, and he smiled sadly. An instant afterward they heard steps rapidly approaching their room. The door opened, and Christopher reappeared without any bottle in his hand.

"Well," said Pontcalec, "where is the wine?"

"Good news!" cried Christopher, without answering Pontcalec's inquiry, "good news, gentlemen!"

"What?" said Montlouis, starting. "Is the regent — dead?"

"Is Bretagne in revolt?" asked Du Couëdic.

"No. I could not call that good news."

"Well, what is it then?" said Pontcalec.

"Monsieur de Châteauneuf has just ordered back to their barracks the hundred and fifty men who were under arms in the market-place, which had terrified everybody."

"Ah," said Montlouis, "I begin to believe it will not take place this evening."

At this moment the clock struck six.

"Well," said Pontcalec, "good news is no reason for our remaining thirsty; go and get our wine."

Christopher went out, and returned in ten minutes with a bottle. The friends, who were still at table, filled their glasses.

"To Gaston's health," said Pontcalec, exchanging a meaning glance with his friends, to whom alone this toast was comprehensible.

And they emptied their glasses, all except Montlouis, who stopped as he was lifting his to his lips.

"Well, what is it?" said Pontcalec.

"The drum," said Montlouis, stretching out his hand in the direction where he heard the sound.

"Well," said Talhouet, "did you not hear what Christopher said? It is the troops returning."

"On the contrary, it is the troops going out; that is not a retreat, but the *générale*."

"The *générale!*" said Talhouet, "what on earth can that mean?"

"No good," said Montlouis, shaking his head.

"Christopher!" said Pontcalec, turning to the jailer.

"Yes, gentlemen, I will find out what it is," said he, "and be back in an instant."

He rushed out of the room, but not without carefully shutting the door behind him. The four friends remained in anxious silence. After a lapse of ten minutes the door opened, and the jailer reappeared, pale with terror.

"A courier has arrived from Paris," said he; "he delivered his despatches, and immediately the guards were doubled, and the drums beat in all the barracks."

"Oh, oh!" said Montlouis, "that concerns us."

"Some one is ascending the stairs," said the jailer, more pale and trembling than those to whom he spoke. In fact, they heard the but-ends of the muskets clanging

on the stones of the corridor, and at the same time several voices were heard speaking hastily.

The door opened, and the clerk reappeared. "Gentlemen," said he, "how long a time do you desire to set your worldly affairs in order, and to prepare to undergo your sentence?"

A profound terror froze even the assistants.

"I desire," said Montlouis, "time for the sentence to reach Paris and return, approved by the regent."

"I," said Talhouet, "only desire the time necessary for the commission to repent of its iniquity."

"As for me," said Du Couëdic, "I wish for time for the minister at Paris to commute the sentence into eight days' imprisonment, which we deserve for having acted somewhat thoughtlessly."

"And you, Monsieur," said the clerk, gravely, to Pontcalec, who was silent, "what do you demand?"

"I," said Pontcalec, calmly, "I demand absolutely nothing."

"Then, gentlemen," said the clerk, "this is the answer of the commission; you have two hours at your disposal to arrange your spiritual and temporal affairs. It is now half-past six; in two hours and a half you must be on the Place du Bouffay, where the execution will take place."

There was a profound silence; the bravest felt fear seizing the very roots of their hair. The clerk retired; no one had replied to him by a single word. The condemned looked at one another, and pressed one another's hands. They had two hours. Two hours, in the ordinary course of life, seem sometimes an age, at other times two hours are but a moment.

The priests arrived, after them the soldiers, then the executioners. The situation was appalling. Pontcalec,

alone, did not despair. Not that the others wanted courage, but they wanted hope; still Pontcalec reassured them by the calmness with which he addressed, not only the priests, but the executioners themselves.

They made the preparations for that terrible process called the toilet of the condemned. The four sufferers must proceed to the scaffold dressed in black cloaks, in order that in the eyes of the people,— among whom an outbreak in behalf of the prisoners was always to be apprehended, — they might be confounded with the priests who exhorted them.

Then the question of tying their hands was raised, — an important question. Pontcalec answered, with his smile of sublime confidence, "Oh, leave us at least our hands free; we will go without disturbance."

"That is not left with us to decide," replied the executioner who was attending to Pontcalec; "unless by special order, the rules are the same for all condemned."

"And who gives these orders?" said Pontcalec, laughing, "the king?"

"No, Monsieur le Marquis," replied the executioner, astonished by such an unexampled presence of mind, "not the king, but our chief."

"And where is your chief?"

"That is he, talking with the jailer Christopher."

"Call him, then," said Pontcalec.

"Ho, Monsieur Lamer!"[1] cried the executioner, "please to come this way; one of these gentlemen is asking for you."

A thunderbolt falling in the midst of them would not have produced a more terrible effect upon the four gentlemen than did this name.

"What did you say?" cried Pontcalec, shaking with

[1] That is to say, *la mer*, the sea.— TR.

terror, — "what did you say? What name did you pronounce?"

"Lamer, Monsieur, he is our chief."

Pontcalec, pale and cold, sank upon a chair, casting an indescribable glance upon his terrified companions. No one around them understood this sudden despair which so rapidly succeeded to that grand confidence.

"Well?" said Montlouis, addressing Pontcalec in a tone of tender reproach.

"Yes, gentlemen, you were right," said Pontcalec; "but I also had reason to believe in this prediction, for it will be accomplished, as the others were. Only this time I yield, and confess that we are lost."

And by a spontaneous movement the four gentlemen threw themselves into one another's arms with prayers to Heaven.

"What do you order?" asked the executioner.

"It is useless to tie their hands if they will give their word of honor; they are soldiers and gentlemen."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE TRAGEDY OF NANTES.

MEANWHILE Gaston hastened along the road to Nantes leaving behind him all postilions, whose function was then, as it is now, to restrain their horses instead of urging them on. He had passed through Sévres and Versailles at the rate of three leagues an hour. On arriving at Rambouillet just at daybreak, he saw the master of the post and some postilions gathered round a horse which had just been bled. The horse was lying stretched on its side, in the middle of the street, breathing with difficulty.

Gaston at first paid no attention to all this; but as he was mounting, he heard one of the by-standers say, "If he goes on at that pace he will kill more than one between this and Nantes."

Gaston was on the point of starting, but struck by a sudden and terrible idea, he stopped and signed to the post-master to come to him. The post-master approached.

"Who has passed by here," asked Gaston, "going at such a pace as to put that poor animal in such a state?"

"A courier of the ministry," answered the post-master.

"A courier of the ministry!" exclaimed Gaston, "and coming from Paris?"

"From Paris."

"About how long ago did he leave here?"

"About two hours."

Gaston uttered a low cry which was like a groan. He knew Dubois, — Dubois, who had tricked him under the disguise of La Jonquière. The good-will of the minister recurred to his mind and frightened him. Why this courier despatched in such haste just two hours before his own departure?

"Oh, I was too happy," thought the young man, "and Hélène was right when she told me she had a presentiment of some great misfortune. Oh, I will overtake this courier, and learn the message that he bears, or perish in the attempt." And he shot off like an arrow.

But with all these doubts and interrogations he had lost ten minutes more, so that on arriving at the first post-station he was still two hours behind. This time the courier's horse had held out, and it was Gaston's which was ready to drop. The post-master tried to make some remarks, but Gaston dropped two or three louis and set off again at a gallop.

At the next posting-house he had gained a few minutes, and that was all. The courier who was before him had not slackened his pace. Gaston increased his own; but this frightful rapidity redoubled the young man's fever and mistrust.

"Oh!" said he, "I will arrive at the same time that he does, if I am unable to precede him." And he still increased his speed, spurring on his horse, which at every station stopped dripping with blood and sweat, or tumbled down exhausted. At every station he learned that the courier had passed almost as swiftly as himself; but he always gained some few minutes, and that sustained his strength.

The postilions whom he passed upon the way, leaving them far behind, pitied, in spite of themselves, the beautiful young man, pale-faced and haggard, who flew on thus,

and took neither rest, nor food, dripping with sweat, despite the cold, and uttering no words but, "A horse! a horse! Quick, there, a horse!"

And, in fact, exhausted, with no force but strength of heart, and maddened more and more by the rapidity of his course and by his apprehensions, Gaston felt his head turn, and his temples throb; the perspiration of his limbs was tinged with blood.

Choked by thirst and the dryness of his throat, at Ancenis he drank a glass of water; it was the first moment he had lost during sixteen hours, and yet the accursed courier was still an hour and a half in advance. In eighty leagues Gaston had gained only some forty or fifty minutes.

The night was drawing in rapidly, and Gaston, ever expecting to see some object appear on the horizon, tried to pierce the obscurity with his bloodshot eyes. On he went, as in a dream, thinking he heard the ringing of bells, the roar of cannon, and the roll of drums. His brain was full of mournful strains and inauspicious sounds. He lived no longer as a man; sustained by feverish excitement, he flew as it were in the air.

On, and still on. About eight o'clock at night he perceived Nantes at length upon the horizon, like a dark mass from the midst of which some scattered lights were shining starlike in the gloom. He tried to breathe, and thinking his cravat was choking him, he tore it off and threw it into the road.

Thus, mounted on his black horse, wrapped in his black cloak, and long ago bareheaded, for his hat had fallen off, Gaston was like some fiendish cavalier bound to the witches' sabbath.

On reaching the gates of Nantes his horse stumbled; but Gaston did not lose his stirrups, pulled him up

sharply, and driving the spurs into his sides, made him recover himself.

The night was dark, no one appeared upon the ramparts, the very sentinels were hidden in the gloom; it seemed like a deserted city. But as he passed through the gate a sentinel said something to him which he did not hear. He held on his way.

At the Rue du Château his horse stumbled and fell, this time to rise no more. What mattered it to Gaston now? — he had arrived. He pursued his way on foot. His limbs were strained and deadened, yet he felt no fatigue; he held the paper crumpled in his hand. One thing, however, astonished him, and that was meeting no one in so populous a quarter. As he advanced, however, and crossed a long street which led to the Place de Bouffay, he heard a dull murmur in that direction. There was a sea of heads, lit up by flaring lights; but Gaston passed on, his business was at the castle.

At last he saw the castle; he saw the door gaping wide before him. The sentinel on guard upon the drawbridge tried to stop him; but Gaston, his order in his hand, pushed him roughly aside and entered the inner door.

Men were talking in a sad tone, and one of them wiped his tears as he talked. Gaston understood it all. "A reprieve!" he cried, "a re——"

The word died upon his lips; but the men had heard better than he had spoken, and they had seen his despairing gesture. "Go, go!" they cried, showing him the way, — "go! and perhaps you may yet arrive in time." And they themselves dispersed in all directions.

Gaston pursued his way; he traversed a corridor, then some empty rooms, then the great hall, and then another corridor. Far off, through the bars, by the torchlight, he perceived the great crowd of which he had caught a

glimpse before. He had passed right through the castle, and he came out on a terrace; thence he perceived the esplanade, a scaffold, men, and all around the crowd.

Gaston tried to cry, but no one heard him, he waved his handkerchief, but no one saw him; another man mounted the scaffold, and Gaston uttered a cry and threw himself down below.

He had leaped from the top of the rampart to the bottom. A sentinel tried to stop him, but he threw him down, and descended a sort of staircase which led down to the square. At the foot of the staircase was a barricade of wagons; Gaston bent down and glided between the wheels. Beyond the barricade were all Saint-Simon's grenadiers, — a living hedge; Gaston, with a desperate effort, broke through the line, and found himself inside the ring. The soldiers, seeing a man, pale and breathless, with a paper in his hand, allowed him to pass. Suddenly he stopped, as if struck by lightning. Talhouet! — he saw him! — Talhouet kneeling on the scaffold!

"Stop! stop!" cried Gaston, with all the energy of despair.

But even as he spoke the sword of the executioner flashed like lightning, a dull and heavy blow followed, and a terrible shudder ran through all the crowd. The young man's shriek was lost in the general cry arising from twenty thousand palpitating breasts at once.

He had arrived a moment to late,— Talhouet was dead; and as he lifted his eyes, he saw in the hand of the headsman the bleeding head of his friend. Then, in the nobility of his heart, he felt that, one being dead, they all should die; that not one of them would accept a pardon which arrived a head to late. He looked around him; Du Couëdic mounted in his turn, clothed with his black mantle, bare-headed and bare-necked. Gaston re-

membered that he also had a black mantle, and that his head and neck were bare, and he laughed convulsively. He saw what remained for him to do, as one sees some wild landscape by the lightning's livid gleam. It is awful, but it is grand.

Du Couëdic bends down; but as he bends, he cries: "See how they recompense the services of faithful soldiers! See how you keep your promises, oh ye cowards of Bretagne!"

Two assistants force him to his knees; the sword of the executioner whirls around and gleams again, and Du Couëdic lies beside Talhouet. The executioner takes up the head; shows it to the people; and then places it in a corner of the scaffold opposite that in which he has already placed Talhouet's.

"Who next?" asks Lamer.

"It matters little," answers a voice, "provided that Monsieur de Pontcalec be the last, according to his sentence."

"I, then," says Montlouis, "I," and he springs upon the scaffold. But there he stops, his hair bristling; at a window before him he has seen his wife and his children.

"Montlouis! Montlouis!" cries his wife, with the despairing accent of a breaking heart, — "Montlouis, look at us!"

At the same moment all eyes are turned toward that window. Soldiers, citizens, priests, and executioners look in that direction. Gaston profits by the opportunity which is thus afforded, springs to the scaffold, and grasps the ladder of which he mounts the first steps.

"My wife! my children!" cries Montlouis, wringing his hands in despair; "oh, go, have pity upon me!"

"Montlouis!" cries his wife, holding up afar the

youngest of his sons, — "Montlouis, bless your children, and one day, perhaps, one of them will avenge you."

"Adieu, my children, my blessing on you!" cries Montlouis, stretching his hands toward the window.

These mournful adieus pierce the night, and reverberate like a terrible echo in the hearts of the spectators.

"Enough!" says Lamer, "enough!" Then turning to his assistants: "Be quick!" he says, "or the people will not allow us to finish."

"Have no fear," says Montlouis; "if the people should rescue me, I would not survive these." And he points with his finger to the heads of his companions.

"Ah, I had estimated them rightly, then," cried Gaston, who heard these words; "Montlouis, martyr, pray for me!"

Montlouis turned round, he seemed to have heard a well-known voice; but at the very moment the executioner seized him, and almost instantly a loud cry told Gaston that Montlouis was like the others, and that his turn was come. He leaped up; in a moment he was on the top of the ladder, and he in his turn looked down from the abominable platform upon all that crowd. At three corners of the scaffold were the heads of Talhouet, Du Couëdic, and Montlouis.

But there arose then a strange commotion in the crowd.

The execution of Montlouis, attended by the circumstances we have narrated, had excited the multitude; swaying and uttering murmurs and imprecations, it seemed to Gaston some vast sea with life in every wave. At this moment the idea flashed upon him that he might be recognized, and that his name uttered by a single mouth might prevent his carrying out his intention. He fell on his knees, and laid his head himself upon the block.

"Adieu!" he murmured, "adieu my poor friend, my tender, dear Hélène; my nuptial kiss has cost me my life indeed, but not my honor. Alas, those fifteen minutes lost in thine arms will have struck down five heads! Adieu, Hélène, adieu!" The sword of the executioner gleamed. "And you, my friends, pardon me," added the young man.

The steel fell; the head rolled one way, and the body fell the other. Lamer raised the head and showed it to the people. But then a mighty murmur rose from the crowd; no one had recognized Pontcalec.

The executioner mistook the meaning of this murmur; he placed Gaston's head in the empty corner, and with his foot pushing the body into the tumbril where those of his three companions awaited it, he leaned upon his sword, and cried aloud, "Justice is done!"

"And I, then," cried a voice of thunder, "am I to be forgotten?" And Pontcalec in his turn leaped upon the scaffold.

"You," cried Lamer, recoiling as if he had seen a ghost. "You, who are you?"

"Myself, Pontcalec; come, I am ready."

"But," said the executioner, trembling, and looking at the four corners of the scaffold in succession,—"but there are four heads already."

"I am the Baron de Pontcalec, do you hear; I am to die the last, — and here I am."

"Count," said Lamer, as pale as the baron, pointing with his sword to the four corners.

"Four heads!" exclaimed Pontcalec; "impossible!" At this moment he recognized Gaston's pale and noble face, which seemed to smile upon him even in death. And he in his turn started back in terror. "Oh, kill me then quickly!" he cried, groaning with impatience; "would you make me die a thousand times?"

During this interval one of the commissioners had mounted the ladder, summoned by the chief executioner. He cast a glance upon Pontcalec.

"It is indeed the Baron de Pontcalec," said the commissioner; "perform your office."

"But," cried the executioner, "there are four heads there already."

"Well then, his will make five; better too many than too few." And the commissioner descended the steps, signing to the drums to beat.

Lamer reeled upon the boards of his scaffold. The tumult increased. The horror was more than the crowd could bear. A long continued murmur ran along the square; the lights were put out, the soldiers, driven back, cried, "To arms!" there was a moment of noise and confusion, and several voices exclaimed: "Death to the commissioners! Death to the executioners!" Then the guns of the fort, loaded with grape, were pointed toward the people.

"What shall I do?" asked Lamer.

"Strike!" answered the same voice which had always spoken.

Pontcalec threw himself on his knees; the assistants placed his head upon the block. Then the priests fled in horror, the soldiers trembled in the gloom, and Lamer, as he struck, turned away his head lest he should see his victim. Ten minutes afterward the square was empty; the windows were closed and dark; the artillery and the infantry, encamped around the demolished scaffold, looked in silence on the spots of blood that reddened the pavement.

The priests to whom the bodies were delivered observed that there were indeed, as Lamer had said, five bodies instead of four. One of the corpses still held a

crumpled paper in his hand. This paper was the pardon of the other four. Then only was all explained, and the devotion of Gaston, which he had confided to no one, was divined.

The priests wished to perform a Mass, but the president, Châteauneuf, fearing some disturbance at Nantes, ordered it to be performed without pomp or ceremony. The bodies were buried on the Wednesday before Easter. The people were not permitted to enter the chapel where the mutilated bodies reposed, which were mostly, report says, consumed by lime.

And thus ended the tragedy of Nantes.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE END.

A FORTNIGHT after the events we have just related, a green carriage, the same which we saw arrive at Paris at the beginning of this history, went out at the same barrier by which it had entered, and proceeded along the road from Paris to Nantes. A young woman, pale and almost dying, was seated in it by the side of an Augustine nun, who uttered a sigh and wiped away a tear every time she looked at her companion.

A man on horseback was watching for the carriage a little beyond Rambouillet. He was wrapped in a large cloak which left nothing visible but his eyes. Near him was another man also enveloped in a cloak. When the carriage passed, he heaved a deep sigh, and tears fell from his eyes. "Adieu!" he murmured. "Adieu, all my joy, adieu, my happiness; adieu, Hélène, my child, adieu!"

"Monseigneur," said the man beside him, "you must pay for being a great prince; and he who would govern others must first conquer himself. Be strong to the end, Monseigneur, and posterity will say that you were great."

"Oh, I will never forgive you, Monsieur," said the regent, with a sigh so deep it sounded like a groan; "you have destroyed my happiness."

"Ah, yes; work for kings," said the companion of this afflicted man, shrugging his shoulders. "'Noli fidere principibus terræ nec filiis eorum.'"

The two men remained there till the carriage had disappeared, and then returned to Paris.

Eight days afterward the carriage entered the porch of the Augustines at Clisson. On its arrival, all the convent pressed round the suffering traveller, — poor floweret broken by the rough winds of the world!

"Come, my child; come and live with us again," said the superior.

"Not live, my mother," said the young girl, "but die."

"Think only of the Lord, my child," said the good abbess.

"Yes, my mother, — our Lord who died for the crimes of men, did he not?"

The superior embraced her without further speech; she was accustomed to witness suffering, and to pity it without asking how it was caused.

Hélène returned to her little cell, from which she had been absent scarcely a month. Everything was still in its place, and exactly as she had left it. She went to the window; the lake was sleeping tranquil and sad, but the ice which had covered it had disappeared beneath the rain, and with it the snow, on which, before departing, the young girl had seen the impression of Gaston's footsteps.

Spring came, and life was everywhere revived except in Hélène's wasted frame. The trees around the little lake grew green, the large leaves of the water-lilies floated once more upon the surface, the reeds raised up their heads, and all the families of warbling birds came back to visit them again.

Hélène lived through the summer, but in September she died. During the morning of her last day the superior received a letter from Paris by a courier. She carried

it to the dying girl. It contained only these words,— "My mother, — obtain from your daughter her pardon for the regent."

Hélène, implored by the superior, grew paler at that name, but she answered, "Yes, my mother, I forgive him; but it is because I go to rejoin him whom he killed."

At four o'clock in the afternoon she breathed her last.

She had asked to be buried at the spot where Gaston used to untie the boat with which he came to visit her; and her last wishes were complied with.

THE END.

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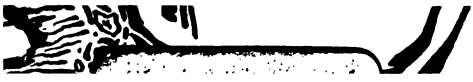
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